

**The Dilemma of Teachers' Work Lives:
An Exploratory Study of
The Organization of Teaching in Hong Kong**

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ABSTRACT

This research attempts to examine the organization of teaching by studying the daily work lives of teachers in Hong Kong. Teachers as the main actors in the educational organization play a key role in the operation of the organization. They are found to be working in an uncertain environment. In recent years, the teaching profession in Hong Kong has been encountering a large impact from the general public. The changing and expanding role expectations within and outside the organization lead to an immense pressure in teachers' work lives. In order to continue surviving in the institution, teachers have to maintain a high level of certainty in their work. By employing the neo-institutional theory and organizational analysis, this research serves as an exploratory study to provide an alternative perspective to analyze the organizational behaviors of teachers in Hong Kong. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' work lives, in-depth interviews and questionnaire survey are employed as the basic research strategies in this research.

It is found that the teaching methods adopted in daily formal teaching are: (1) they may not be necessarily derived from, or lead to teaching effectiveness; and, (2) they appear a high level of homogeneity. The teaching activities and beliefs are to a great extent shaped and affected by some standardized "ritual classifications" in the educational institution. The standardization of the ritual classifications allows teachers to perform their work and perceive other's work based on the "logic of confidence". By doing so, as I argue, they can enjoy a high level of autonomy in instructional work which is coherent with the notion of professionalism held by teachers.

On the other hand, teachers have identified some obstacles and constraints in their work lives. They hold relatively different, sometimes even inconsistent views towards the constraints in their work. The inconsistency shows that the roles and responsibilities in the non-formal work of teachers are ill defined in the educational institution. In spite of it, teachers resolve the constraints and obstacles by participating in many educational activities that are framed as the professional development. Since these activities are organized around some fashionable and

normative models of educational ideals, for example, IT enhancement, project learning and teaching etc., teachers find themselves engage in an alternative mode of organizing their work gaining symbolic importance although inconsistency becomes prevalent. To conclude, the reality of teachers' work activities and belief systems are shaped and constructed by the wider cultural environment.

論文摘要

是次研究目的是透過了解香港教師的工作生活從而探討教師如何組織其教學工作。教師是在學校組織中最重要的行動者，他們的工作對於組織的運作十分關鍵，很多研究都發現他們的工作環境是充滿不穩定的元素。香港教師在近年更面對來自社會的大挑戰，社會普遍對於教師的角色期望亦越來越多。教師身兼多項工作及職責令他們感到很大的工作壓力。為了在這教育制度中的角色得以延續，教師必須在工作上維持高度的穩定性。這探索研究嘗試以新制度主義和借用組織分析去從一新角度了解香港教師的組織行為。為了取得比較全面的現況，是次研究以深入訪談和問卷調查作為主要的研究方法。

研究資料顯示，香港教師在日常的課室教學工作上，教師日常所用的教學法：(1)並非必然基於或導向「教學效能」；及(2)具高度的相似性。我認為教師的教學法和信念都是受到在教育制度中一些高度標準化的「儀式分類」(ritual classifications)影響和塑造。這些標準化的儀式分類讓教師無論是在自己的工作，或對於其他同事的工作都能以「信心邏輯」(logic of confidence)來維持整體的穩定性。這樣，教師便得以在教學工作上享有高度的自主性，而這正是與其職業的「專業主義」相呼應。

教師在工作上亦有不少阻力和限制，這些阻力或限制對於正規教學工作具顯著的影響。對於這些限制和教學阻礙，教師的看法明顯有差異，有些甚至持相反的意見。而這出現不一致的看法，我認為是由於非教學工作或職責在教育制度中並沒有完整的詮釋或界定。儘管如此，教師卻有一套相同的策略——參與「專業發展」的活動以減輕工作上的限制和阻力。由於這些活動是基於一套世界教育文化潮流的理念而生，例如資訊科技的發展，教與學專題研習等等，教師察覺到其工作進入了另一模式：就是在不一致的工作環境下，教師的工作逐漸傾向著重象徵層次。本論文旨在提出教師的利益，及其工作的行為和看法都是受到外在更大的制度環境所影響。

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The Working Environment of Teachers in Hong Kong

“Fundamentally, education is a matter of personal matter between teacher and child. The teacher is the most potent factor in the school life of the child: he can never tell where his influence stops. Indeed, the quality of teacher-pupil relationships profoundly influences the intellectual, emotional and social development of children.”

(Speech by Mr. J. Canning, Director of Education, at the 40th Anniversary of the Hong Kong Teachers' Association on 18th July 1974)¹

The role of teachers is eminently crucial. Teachers compose the largest labor force at school and are the front-line educators in the process of schooling. They are the agent bringing the educational policy to the day-to-day teaching and learning process. The successful implementation of educational policies and reforms largely depends on the dedication of teachers who put these policies into daily practice. No policies can be taken place at school properly without the participation of teachers. Any changes in educational policies or system will bring about adjustments in the work of teachers as well. These changes could be explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly, rapidly or slowly affecting the work of teachers on a daily basis. A tiny change in the educational policy, such as the amendment in the curriculum, will be significant enough to alter the teachers' work plan. Teachers have to be adaptable to new changes by altering their teaching schedule, curriculum focus and teaching methods: all suggesting teachers are called to work in an uncertain working environment independently.

¹ *New Horizons- 40th Anniversary Special Issue. The Journal of the Hong Kong Teachers' Association.* No. 15. October 1974. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Teachers' Association.

1.1 The Uncertain and Complex Working Environment

Considering classroom as the main workplace for teachers, most research on classroom agrees that the organization of classroom in real-life teaching is featured as uncertain and complex. Jackson (1968) claims that teachers' work is identified by its uncertainty, complexity, individualism and immediacy. Lortie (1975) also finds the environment of the real setting of a classroom too complex to apply the teaching and learning theories teachers acquire in pre-job training. It is commonplace that teachers have to deal with a complex and uncertain situation (Doyle 1986; Goodlad 1984; Dreeben 1973). Owing to the uncertain and complex working environment, they can hardly apply teaching and learning theories learnt in the training programs.

The process of teaching is, in many educational studies, perceived as solely events taken place in an isolated room, independent of other school activities (Lortie 1965; Bidwell 1975); in some studies it is named the "zone of autonomy" of a teacher (Lortie 1969; Doyle 1986). Being the rational actors who play active roles and hold the power in the process of teaching, teachers doubtlessly enjoy a large extent of autonomy in classroom. Lortie (1975) suggests that school is built upon teacher's independence rather than interdependence. Some studies argue that there is little in common among individual teachers in terms of teaching skills and beliefs, due to their individuality. To begin, personal experience rather than theories and techniques obtained in pre-job or on-the-job training is dominating in real teaching environment. The co-operations among teachers within a school or between schools are, in addition, rare. Jackson (1968) finds that there are few interactions between teachers. Though some indicators suggest that peers influence newcomers, teachers are less likely to be so influenced, as there is a lack of sharing of common

understanding and techniques. All pinpoint teachers are working rather independently and the classroom is the sovereignty of teachers.

It appears that teachers enjoy great autonomy in their workplace. On the contrary, hierarchical influence is limited (Jackson 1968; Lortie 1975; Becker 1952, 1995). Lortie claims that curricular objectives are “operationalized” differently due to the cellular structure of classrooms and the discretion of the teachers (1975: 140). Besides, there is an absence of authoritative reassurance. Teachers spend a lot of time focusing on the appraisal of other adults such as colleagues and parents rather than authoritative superordinates. The system of weak career incentives, though may enhance teacher autonomy, indeed works to “reduce the capacity of officials to exert influence over *individual* teachers” (Lortie 1975: 100) (*Italics* are originated from the author). Lortie’s findings support Waller’s (1932) view that teaching is “isolated” from the larger social world as teachers are working in a “guarded” site—a venue of little interaction with the outside world. Being a core function in the educational organization, teaching seems to be an individualistic and highly independent organizational process.

If every single teacher indeed enjoys an absolutely high level of autonomy, it should easily conclude that there are a wide variety of different teaching practices. Yet surprisingly, many empirical classroom studies point out that the variation of pedagogical innovations is, in fact, very small (for example, Jackson 1968; Lortie 1975; Doyle 1986; Goodlad 1984; Bidwell 1975). The form of teaching in this cellular structure is highly homogenized (Lortie 1975). Are there any teaching norms governing their behaviors? However homogenized the teaching practices or beliefs are, they would not be formed out of nothing.

The uncertain working environment of teachers extends beyond the classroom. Teachers in recent years have to catch up with some changing educational ideals that might be reflected in the educational reforms and discourses. These ideals are prevalent in modern educational models that have widely diffused into many national systems. For instance, technically, a teacher is expected to have equipped with a certain level of IT knowledge to cope with the technological change of the society. Besides, student counseling is a relatively recent skills and that a teacher is also expected to be able to apply this new educational strategy in their role tasks. However, the traditional role of teachers, for example, classroom instruction, administrative and extra-curricular duties have not been removed or replaced in their routine work. The intensification of teachers' work (Apple 1986; Apple and Jungck 1992) then becomes a major educational issue all over the world in recent years. Teachers' role expectations and work responsibilities are expanding in a high speed and as a result, has become the major source of work pressure to teachers. All of these are reinforcing the uncertainty of the working environment among teachers.

Despite the work of a teacher is claimed not so highly influenced by other school-level activities, this kind of research does not explain further how teachers organize their work in real life. Notwithstanding the limited hierarchical structure and relational structure, there must be some larger factors shaping and reinforcing the teaching practices and beliefs so that teachers can survive and cope with their daily uncertain working environment. How do the teaching beliefs and practices are formed and shaped so that teachers can maintain a high level of certainty in their work? What is(are) the larger force(s), if any, that shapes the teaching culture and norms? It is along this line of thought that this present research is generated with the

aim of identifying the ideological system which shapes teachers' beliefs.

1.2 Working Environment of Teachers in Hong Kong

Recently in Hong Kong, the uncertain elements appearing in teachers' work have reached an ultimate level. Since the introduction of mass education two decades ago, any educational reforms of any scale in any parts of the system would exert, without doubts, influences on teachers' daily work. For example, the policy of 9-year free and compulsory education drew a vast number of children to the educational system, and in turn, affected the class size, the organization and structure of school, the curriculum, the quality of the students input—all factors transforming teachers' work. More recently, the reforms on the teaching profession has become a major issue in educational policies. Those new reforms include the introduction of Language Proficiency Test of in-service teachers, the promotion of graduate teachers in the whole profession, together with the professional development. The social expectation on the teaching profession is changing: pushing teacher staff to reach professionalism. It is expected that through implementing those policies, the teaching quality—that is the teaching effectiveness—and consequently, the students' learning will be improved. Perhaps it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of the suggested policies; however, teachers' work lives have already been significantly altered.

Uncovering these newly introduced policies and reforms, we can see that the definition of teachers' roles and responsibilities is changing, or more specifically, expanding. Lo (2000) observes that the reform initiatives have changed the nature of work for the majority of teachers in Hong Kong – the pedagogy as the more stable area of work has changed its meaning to include a plethora of responsibilities (2000:

241). It is obvious that this changing definition in the wider environment exerts a considerable impact on both individual teachers' work lives and also the teaching profession as a group as teachers have to live up to the expectations of the public in order to survive in and continue their work.

Surveys conducted by two public organizations recently depict some current work situation of Hong Kong teachers suggesting that the uncertainty has affected the psychological health of the teaching profession as well as the teaching effectiveness in the organization. A survey conducted in September 2001 by Hong Kong Professional Teacher Union (HKPTU)², the biggest professional organization of teachers in Hong Kong, finds that more than 70% of the interviewed teachers were under heavy work pressure; 10% of them reported the pressure had reached an unbearable situation. The research also shows that about 30% of the teachers worked more than 12 hours daily, probably one of the reasons why they suffer heavy pressure.

The severity of this problem was also reported in another survey conducted by a political party more recently³. 55% of the interviewed in-service teachers reported having pressure from their work and 20% of them believed that the pressure was going beyond their bearable limits. One in every ten teachers was found having thought of hurting themselves or their family members due to work pressure. These figures sketched out the situations teachers are in, places of extreme workloads and pressures. It may not be absolutely accurate to conclude the aforementioned is solely

² Homepage of Hong Kong Professional Teacher Union (HKPTU), a news-release on the 20th September 2001. <<http://www.hkptu.org.hk/education/newsdgrd/news39.htm>>

³ The research was conducted by the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong, reported in SCMP on 7th October 2002. 1022 teachers from 34 schools were surveyed successfully.

caused by the educational reforms; yet, the point of view of teachers is crucial for upgrading the quality of teaching in the long run.

It is noteworthy to understand the real situations of teachers in Hong Kong. Only by studying how teachers perceive their professional role and belief system can the educational policies and reforms be carried out effectively as expected. Similarly, only by taking teachers' point of view and positions into account can the policies turn out beneficial to the teaching profession, the students, the educational system and the society as a whole. To understand teachers' perceptions and teaching behaviors, we should better understand the daily actualities in their work place. In Hong Kong, though there is a sheer amount of literature on teaching, most of them have failed to uncover the reality of school activities. A sociological account of teachers' daily work is needed and helpful to understand the ideology governing the teaching practices and beliefs of teachers in Hong Kong. How do teachers respond to and cope with uncertainty in their work? How are their teaching practices and beliefs constructed? These questions are rarely examined by educational researchers in Hong Kong. Thus, in this research, I am to examine the ways teachers in Hong Kong organize their work—namely, to uncover the forces shaping the teaching practices and beliefs, and the coping strategies of teachers in dealing with uncertainties the daily teaching situations.

1.3 Teachers' Daily Work

In Hong Kong, lots of educational literatures have reported the immense workload of teachers in primary and secondary school. Some local scholars point out that teaching in Hong Kong is a relatively demanding work (Postiglione and Lee 1997: 1). The works of teachers include classroom teaching, attending about 30

lessons per week or per cycle⁴ for both primary and secondary teachers (Education Department 1997⁵), handling about 35 students in each class⁶, marking all students' assignments, preparing lessons, carrying out administrative work, writing reports, partaking in meetings, holding assembly, as well as upholding other responsibilities such as seeing students or parents, counseling, and facilitating extra-curricular activities, etc. Listed above are the common tasks a teacher has to deal with regularly and routinely. As I mentioned above, teachers in Hong Kong are found to work under immense pressure and it is claimed that teachers' burnout in Hong Kong has generated great concerns among school officials and educators (Mo 1991; Wong 1989; Chan and Hui 1995; Chan 1998). The heavy workload, the expanded roles and responsibilities, together with the increasing non-teaching work make them burnout in their work. The general situation of the teachers' work in Hong Kong, the perceptions of them towards their work including instructional and non-instructional work in particular are examined in this study.

Basically, teachers' work can be divided into two aspects, namely teaching work and non-teaching work. Teaching work means work related to formal classroom teaching, that is the transmission of formal curriculum to the students. It includes several parts such as instruction, marking students' assignments, and lesson preparation. Those aspects are directly related to student learning of the formal knowledge. This aspect of formal teaching is commonly perceived as the core technical function of a school and also the major and well-defined daily work of

⁴ Some schools adopt "teaching cycle" as the schedule of the lessons instead of "teaching week". In most cases one cycle comprises 6-day lessons (e.g. Day A to Day F).

⁵ The statistic obtained is statistics in 1996. Information after 1996 is not officially recorded.

⁶ The average class sizes of primary school and secondary school in the year of 2001-2002 are 33 and 38.2 (for F.1- F.5) respectively. Information from the homepage of Education and Manpower Bureau (former Education Department): <www.emb.gov.hk>

teachers. The context, the schedule, the class, the scope of formal teaching are organized, formalized and standardized in the school or societal level. Teachers are expected to teach daily according to the defined structure.

Another aspect of teachers' daily work is non-teaching work. It means any work that is not directly related or contributive to instruction. It includes handling administrative work and functional units, and being class master, team leader or new teacher mentor, etc. Those works and responsibilities are not well-defined in the educational system but are in reality being a part of teachers' work. Teachers in Hong Kong are required to take up expanded roles and responsibilities besides formal teaching in recent years (Cheng, Tam and Tsui 2002). The new roles are expected to support the rapid developments of individuals, local communities, societies, and international relations (Cheng 1996; Tsui and Cheng 2000; Cheng, Tam and Tsui 2002). The changing expectation of teachers' role in Hong Kong affects the effectiveness of teaching indirectly as a result. This aspect of teachers' daily work occupies a considerable amount of teachers' energy and time on a daily basis. It also generates some uncertainties and challenges on teachers' daily work, lives and psychological health. According to the survey conducted by the HKPTU, some of the responded teachers regard this kind of work as the most time-consuming but the least effective⁷.

It is plausible to take the non-teaching work into our analysis for several reasons. First, educationally, the amount of work that occupies much of teachers' time (Lo 2000: 241) and energy might turn out affecting teaching effectiveness.

⁷ According to the HKPTU survey, 10% of the interviewees reported that they have more than 12 items of non-teaching work tasks or responsibilities in school. 60% of them considered the school-level administrative work as the most time consuming but the least effective.

Second, psychologically, work not related to formal teaching is the main cause of teachers' stress and work pressure, which directly influence the mental and psychological health of teachers. Third, hence sociologically, it is important to understand the perceptions and coping strategies of the teachers in their daily practices so that teachers can survive and cope with the uncertain working environment. Fourth, organizationally, the non-teaching work exerts a considerable effect on the functioning of formal teaching. It directly influences organizational performance and effectiveness. Thus, for the sake of teachers and also all parties involved in the educational organization, the non-teaching work has to be taken into account to have a better understanding of teachers' working lives.

Despite the significant time and energy devoted to both aspects in teachers' daily work, the interrelationship between the formal teaching work and non-teaching work draw insufficient attention in educational research. In order to understand in greater depth of the daily work of teachers in Hong Kong, this research, taking the formal teaching and the non-teaching work into account, attempts to examine ways that teachers organize their work in order to maintain a high level of certainty in their work environment.

1.4 Organizational Structure of School

Traditional educational theories emphasize the technical core function – formal teaching – of the organization. For example, it focuses on the effectiveness of the organization or the interaction of teachers and students in classroom teaching. Yet, as mentioned before, to understand the reality of teachers' work lives, we have to better investigate both aspects of teaching: the formal and non-formal work of teachers. Traditional organizational theories such as coupling model or bureaucratic

model view that the non-teaching tasks do have real functions and, perhaps, effect in reality. The functions of the non-teaching tasks are closely related and directly connected to the formal functioning of school. In other words, the structural elements of school are tightly organized around its technical functions, which also directly relate to each other in the social structure. Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1978, 1992) suggest that school has to maintain a “schooling rule” which is institutionalized in society.

“This rule specifies a series of *ritual categories* – teachers, students, topics and schools – that define education. Elaborate organizational controls ensure that these categories have been incorporated into the organization. But the ritual categories themselves and the system of inspection and control are formulated to avoid inspecting the actual instructional activities and outcomes of schooling” (1992: 98). [emphasis added]

For example, a primary student, a third-band secondary school, Form 3 Mathematics syllabus are all well defined in the formal structure of the educational institution. The programmed schooling rule is incorporated into the formal structure of school. They are commonly shared not only by any in the educational system, but also the general public. The parents of the students, the school administrators, and the individuals in the society will understand that a Form 3 student must first go through the study of Form 2; that a performance of students in a first-band school are generally better than that of students in a third-band school. The ritual classifications are universalistic and highly standardized. Organizational behaviors are also shaped and constrained by the ritual categories. The teaching practices and beliefs are, in a similar manner, organized around the ritual categories well-defined in the institutional environment. Therefore, a licensed primary school teacher will have the legitimacy of being a proper teacher in that school level.

By the incorporation of the ritual classifications into school, school can gain legitimacy by the “logic of confidence” (Meyer and Rowan 1977). The logic of confidence is similar to what Goffman (1967) calls “face work”— “the process of maintaining the other’s face or identity and thus of maintaining the plausibility and legitimacy of the organization itself” (Meyer 1992: 102). Indeed, a school will not be regarded as a “functional” organization if it hires a teacher who is not trained in an accredited institution, likewise, a school will not admit a student to the secondary school level had he or she not finished his or her primary level. More specifically, only by assimilating the ritual classifications into the daily teaching practices and teaching perceptions can teachers obtain legitimacy and can teaching be considered taken place effectively on a daily basis. By doing so, inconsistencies and uncertainties in the daily work of teachers is free from being discovered publicly. The certainty of teachers’ work can, thus, be maintained by this “logic of confidence” chartered from the society as a whole with complex organizational processing and standardization.

As suggested by Meyer and Rowan (1978, 1992), “the most visible aspect of the logic of confidence in the educational system is the myth of teacher professionalism” (1992: 91). It is conventional to believe that educational bureaucracy counteract with professionalism as teachers are regarded as a group of subordinates who is “semi-professional” (Etzioni 1969) working in a hierarchical structure, controlled by the superior office to a large extent. The educational bureaucracies conventionally imply close control, inspection and evaluation of teachers. People will assume that it would be the full responsibility of the bureaucracies to control instructional activities. Meyer and Rowan argue that the

assumption per se functions as the logic of confidence and professionalism serves the requirements of confidence and good faith. The myth of professionalism, consequently, buffers the uncertainty raised in classroom instruction. Therefore, the professional status of teachers in the past decade rises rapidly with the growth of educational bureaucracies. The myth of professionalism, as a result, “serves to legitimate the confidence the system places in its teachers and to provide an explanation of why this confidence is justified” (Meyer and Rowan 1992: 91).

In Hong Kong, there are some studies discuss the inconsistencies of the school organization. Walker and Cheong (1996) find the inconsistencies and incongruence in Hong Kong primary schools. Their findings show that there is incongruence between espoused administrator beliefs about professional development and practices in schools and there are inconsistencies in schools in terms of planning, purposes, activities and teacher involvement. Besides, Lo (2000) also finds that though the nature of work becomes more differentiated, teachers encounter difficulties in dealing with the fast-changing social demands and expectations. To ease with the uncertainties in their daily work place, as he claims, teachers tend to maintain their focus on the well-defined works – instructional work—for teachers remain conservative in their approach to teaching (2000: 248; Lortie 1975). From a macro-structural perspective, it is due to the fact that formal teaching, as the core technical function and activity of school has already been well institutionalized. The institutionalization of formal teaching stabilizes the uncertain and fast-changing work environment and nature. To further examine these intellectual issues, I will examine the daily work of teachers in Hong Kong from neo-institutional perspective.

1.5 Research Inquiries

Lortie (1975:214) claims that “the quality and quantity of reporting on school actualities remain seriously inadequate...the gap between the possible and the actual has become an issue” (1975: 218). In this research, I am going to fill this gap by analyzing the teaching reality along the lines of institutionalist perspective. Theoretically, institutionalism has failed to further elaborate teachers’ work in reality. Understanding the relationship between the day-to-day activities of teacher’s work and the organizational structure is meaningful in school organizational analysis and organizational theories. Practically, to understand how teacher’s professional practices and beliefs are shaped, an aspect not been fully studied particularly in the field of education of Hong Kong in itself warrants our attention. How do teachers organize their work so that it can be viewed upon as the most beneficial to the organization, the school? And how teachers organize their work so as to become functional components for the continuing survival of school? It is interesting to unfold how teachers perceive and organize these defined and undefined tasks in daily practices.

All in all, my research enquiry is two-folded: first, assuming that teachers are working under the fast-changing educational system, I would examine how teachers organize their instructional practices in reality and second, how they cope with the constraints and inconsistencies at work. To study these, the organizational analysis from neo-institutional perspective will be employed. Meanwhile, a multi-level analysis will be introduced: to link the micro behavioral level of the actors to the macro organizational structure and its institutional environment. It is found that on the one hand, the standardization of the ritual classifications of

educational institution are some forces which shape their teaching practices and beliefs in formal teaching; and on the other, as rational actors, teachers hold different views and responses to the constraints in their work and have some coping strategies.

I argue that both the standardization and the inconsistencies of their teaching beliefs and practices are shaped by the institutional forces, namely the ideology of professionalism. It is by doing so, teachers can gain legitimacy derived from the educational institution and also maintain certainty in the uncertain and complex working environment.

This research serves more as an exploratory study than hypothesis-testing academic venture by adopting the neo-institutional perspective as my guiding theoretical framework. The scarce attention that is given to the study of the teaching force in Hong Kong in an organizational framework will add to our knowledge of how school reforms and internal structures can be affected and shaped by larger social forces, and thereby enhancing our understanding of the relationship between school in reality and society.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The next chapter contains a literature review on the organizational theories and models. Chapter 3 introduces the conceptual framework and the empirical methodology employed in this research. Chapter 4 and 5 are data analysis based on my research findings and where some discussion points are developed. Finally, I will provide some concluding remarks based on my research effort.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review: Organizational Analysis in Functionalism, Conflict Perspective and Neo-institutional Perspective

School as an organization is a central research field in Sociology of education and Sociology of organization. It, like other social organizations, plays a leading role in modern world (Scott 1998: 1). Based on the work of the classic sociologists including Emile Durkeim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx, organizational models from different theoretical perspectives are developed. Those models are inspiring for us to analyze the actions in the organizations and the relationship of organizations and the wider society. In the past two decades, a breakthrough of the development of the organizational theory emerged in the field of Sociology of organization and of Sociology of education. The Neo-institutional theory emphasizes that organizations are connected to and constructed by the wider social environments in which they are embedded (Meyer and Scott 1992: 1).

The organizational theories traditionally have found that organizations are embedded in and affected by the wider environment. However, the perception of the function, the extent and the way of influence, and the nature of the organizational environment are distinguishingly redefined and further emphasized by the neo-institutionalism. According to the theory, the structure of institutionalized organization is loosely coupled (Bidwell 1965; Weick 1976, 1982; March and Olsen 1976), and sometimes even decoupled (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1992). That means the formal structure is loosely linked with the daily activity, and the daily activity is decoupled with its effects (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1978, 1992).

In the following, I will review three well-established sociological schools of thoughts, namely functionalism, conflict perspective and neo-institutionalism, and their organizational analyses respectively. In each part of the review, I will attempt to analyze the views on teaching as work in organization respectively. I argue that the work of teachers, or teaching, is overlooked in most of the organizational analyses. In this research, I will employ Neo-institutional point of view to analyze teachers and teaching in school organization.

2.1 Functional Perspective on Organizational Analysis

Functionalism is one of the well-established theories in Sociology. It views modern society as a biological organism which is composed of different parts. The parts are functionally differentiated to each other like different organs of any living thing in nature. This perspective tries to view society in a scientific way by employing a biological analogy. Survival, which is the main challenge encountered by all living things, is also the ultimate and continuous problem faced by the whole society. In other words, society has to always resolve this problem of survival by making sure that different sections are doing their parts appropriately and functioning well.

As every part of a society performs its function, the survival of society is guaranteed. The different parts of society do not work independently. Instead, they are interdependent and interpenetrate to each other. To survive, society, therefore, always strives for the state of equilibrium by balancing the dynamics generated in the interactions. Society, thus, is a dynamic “living thing” which can only survive by a fine functioning of division of labor. To do it, it requires society to generate a great inward force allowing different parts to cooperate with each other and to contribute

to society as a whole. This is what we called “integration” of society. Integration is the key to survive.

The founder of functionalism, Emile Durkheim, by studying the problem of existence and survival of society, works on the way society integrates throughout his academic course. In his classic publications “*The Division of Labor in Society*” (1964), Durkheim states that modern society is distinguished from traditional society by different forms of solidarity. In traditional society, individuals are living together based on similarity. As their ways of living are very alike, the society is integrated by mechanical solidarity. It means that people are grouped together as if they are performing similar work, making a similar living. The social and geographical mobility is small. In modern society, the mobility among different places becomes more extensive. Individuals living together are based on differences rather than similarity. To maximize the productivity of the society and solve the problem of survival due to increasing population and complexity, the society is integrated by organic solidarity. Division of labor is required for different individuals to enter specific or expertise sections and perform their parts. For Durkheim, integration is important to society’s survival.

Durkheim’s idea of “division of labor”(1964) is useful for analyzing the education system in modern society. He views education as an important institution in the modernity project. This institution has a close relationship with the larger social structure. In his work “*On Education and Society*”(1977), he pointed out the educational structure changes with wider social structure. The main functions of education system in modern society are selection and allocation. Students entering the education system are categorized into different grade levels. During the schooling

process, they will learn their social roles and their appropriate positions in a collective group according to their different talents and abilities through participation in the schooling process. Every student is then selected and allocated to the strata of the society after graduation. Different members in different sectors, therefore can perform their functions and interdependent to each other so as to contribute to the larger society. In this way, education, as the central mechanism for division of labor, serves an important integration function in modern society.

Here, the Durkheimian analysis asserts the chartered power of educational system in modern society. School functions to differentiate students by its evaluation and assessments mechanisms such as tests and examinations in the daily schooling process. The performances of the students in school are recognized and counted by the local society, even over the world. Education, as other social institutions, has a religious like character (Meyer 1983; Scott 1995). The symbolic systems play an important role in the relationship between society and the institution. Individuals living in the society are integrated altogether by their consensus adhering to the symbolic systems. Durkheim sheds light on the symbolic role of the institution which is essential to our discussion in the later part of this chapter.

Talcott Parsons, who is greatly influenced by the work of Durkheim, further emphasizes the importance of integration of society. His work, *The Social System* (1951), gives us a macroscopic perspective to the analysis of society. In his AGIL analogy, society can be conceptually divided into four systems in which each of them concludes their four sub-systems and so on. Each sub-system in a larger system carries one of the functions of adaptation (A), goal-attainment (G), integration (I) and latency or pattern maintenance (L). The sub-systems in the same

larger system penetrate each other by media of interchange. Among the four systems, he thinks that integration is the most important for the survival of society.

In his later work, Parsons suggests the idea of “cybernetic hierarchy of control”(Parsons 1971; Toby 1977). Integration is of the top of the hierarchy which controls the other social systems. To attain integration of society, the role of value system is essential. He places the cultural system into the highest importance during social actions. Parsons uses the term “institutionalized individualism”(1982) to emphasize “the individual’s freedom from previously constraining limitation.” He further explains “this enhanced capacity at the individual level, however, must meet a second requirement: it must develop concomitantly with that of social and cultural frameworks for organization and institutionalized norms” (Alexander 1982). The institutionalized action is motivated by “moral” rather by instrumental concerns (Scott 1998: 12). And institution is a system of norms that regulate the relations of individuals to each other and that define what the relations of individuals ought to be (Parsons 1934/1990: 327). This point echoes with the idea of Durkheim on the importance of the highly institutionalized system which is sometimes beyond individuals’ discretion.

Specifically, Parsons states the important role of education as a socializing agent in modern society. In his publication “*School Class as a Social System*” (1959), he points out that the main functions of education are selection and socialization. The commitment of the value and the role structure, and the capacities of skills and social expectations are internalized into the pupils during the process of schooling in the class as a social system. Educational achievement is a key to success in both the education system and in the larger society. Students learn how to achieve appraisal

academically and morally. Academically, they have to manage the cognitive knowledge taught in the formal curriculum. Morally, it is also important for students to behave well and conform to the norms defined by society. During the socialization process in the school class, teachers are the major socializing agent in this social system.

Here, Parsons also asserts the role of teacher plays in the schooling process. Teacher, representing the adult world in the class, is a crucial socializing agent imposed with these social expectations. He or she is “institutionally defined as superior to any pupil in knowledge of curriculum subject-matter and in responsibility as a good citizen of the school” (Parsons 1959:163). The role of a teacher is similar to that of a mother. They are different to each other in the fact that teachers must insist on universal norms and the differential reward of achievement. The latter is responsible to bring about and legitimize “a differentiation of the school class on an achievement axis” (Parsons 1959: 163-164). The role structure rather than the individual personality is functioning and being internalized in the schooling process. Here, parallel to Durkheim, the social expectations and norms, and the collectively defined social roles are diffused into the educational institutions so as to perform its integration function.

Parsons’ *The Structure of Social Action* (1937) is noteworthy in this research. The action theory emphasizes the important of cultural system in an action. According to his theory, every social actor is rational but not utilitarian. They are rational in the sense that they have their own discretion during the social action. It contrasts to the view of individual’s behaviors as mere reactions or response to their environment or stimulus. The actor, as Parsons contends, has rational decision

making process and has choices of action in this personality system. However, he/she is not calculative or utilitarian in the sense that only material benefits are counted. Rather, he/she will also take into account the normative aspects in his or her decision meaning that collective interests will be also a factor affecting and shaping his or her choices of action. The social factor will also alter the action he or she takes. Therefore, Parsons calls the theory “the Voluntaristic Theory of Action” (1937) in which the value-rational aspects of a social actor are emphasized. The theory is contributive to our discussion later about the way teachers organize their work at school.

Although Durkeim and Parsons both did not put much attention to discuss the organizational structure of a school, their points of view lead us to track our focus on the social part rather than the technical part (that means transmission of formal curricular knowledge) of role played by educational system. Seeing education as an important institution in the modern society, they both emphasize the socializing function of the institution. During the process of socialization, there exist larger value systems for the actors, especially for the teachers, to act rationally and normatively so that integration of the individualistic modern society can be attained as a result. This view on the societal effects of education system is crucial and influential to develop a functionalistic organizational analysis.

Some early organizational theories adopt functionalistic perspective. Functionalism suggests that every part of the society is functional to the survival of the whole society. Functional-organizational analysis views different parts of an organization are functional to the organization’s existence and survival. Besides, it emphasize that all parts are interdependent and cooperate to each other. This

perspective assumes that the structural differentiation of the organization implies functional differentiation. On the other hand, on the societal level, the existence of every organization, part and individual is functional to the society so as to gain legitimacy to survive in society. The problem of survival is the societal goal which they continue to tackle overtime.

2.1.1 Production Function Model

Earlier researchers of school organization use a relatively straightforward model. This functional analogy was exemplified by the landmark research on Equality of Educational Opportunity (Coleman et. al.: 1966). It views school as a production machine which serves for social needs. The input-output model uses an economic production function to estimate the output (student learning) in response to the inputs such as facilities, expenditures and student characteristics. This production machine is functional to the larger society as it produces the “products” for social needs. The model focuses on the positive correlations between input (school resources) and output (student learning). In order to improve students’ knowledge, it is necessary for school to attain better resources. This perspective sketches an outlook of the structure of school organization which sows the seeds for organizational study of school.

Every actor participating in the production process is considered as one of the resources which is the determinant factors of the quality of outcome. Teachers, following this perspective, are one of the inputs determining the products. He or she is the front-line educators having intensive interactions with students. His or her quality of performance is closely related to student learning. For instance, pre-job training and professional knowledge will promote a better teaching. Teachers’

characteristics, seem to matter compared with other school resources such as textbooks, libraries and laboratories (such as Murnane 1975; Summers and Wolfe 1977; see Heyns 1986; Gamoran, Secada and Merrett 2000 for detail reviews).

In Hong Kong, Bray (1997) employs the Economic Function model to explain the expansion of higher education in the 1990s. Discussing the close relationship between education and the labor market, he claims that the expansion of places in higher education in Hong Kong is evident to meet social demands rather than economic needs (Postiglione and Lee 1997). Human capital is crucial to the economic development as it provides educated and qualified graduates to the occupational structure. Despite the unsatisfactory result of the economic returns after the expansion of the higher education sector, he concludes that “the policy makers and planners have to monitor labor market links at all levels, and especially at senior secondary and higher educational levels” (Bray 1997: 60). It shows that he believes the human capital, which is still an important factor for economic development, cannot be improved by better manpower planning in the formal education. Here, he adopts an input-output model to evaluate the effect of human capital and the labor market.

Teachers as the core human capital in schooling process are believed to have great influence on students’ learning. The effect of the characteristics of teachers to students’ learning, however, is not proven to be promising. The results obtained in some empirical research are inconsistent, if not contradicting (Gamoran, Secada and Merrett 2000: 39). This model, focusing on the input and output of the schooling machine, has failed to explain the process of schooling. That means the mechanisms of the effect of the teachers to students learning remain unexplored. The

way of distribution and use of resources are much pivotal to ensure understanding the relationship between input and output (Gamoran, Secada and Merrett 2000). More specifically, how do teachers affect student learning? How does a trained teacher teach differently from a non-trained teacher? The process of teaching is, similar to the whole process of formal schooling, a black box. Moreover, what is the interrelationship between teachers and other “inputs”? It is overly-simplified to consider different resources independently and separately affecting the result of schooling. It has not explained the mechanism of the effect on teaching.

2.1.2 Coupling Model (Nested Layer Model)

A breakthrough of this model was led by Rebecca Barr and Robert Dreeben (1983). Coupling model (or Nested Layer model) (Barr and dreeben 1977; Gamoran and Dreeben 1986; Dreeben 1968) views the organization is composed of levels of structures. The levels vary in the way resources are allocated, transformed and used. Barr and Dreeben (1983) distinguish school organization into four main levels: district or societal level, school level, classroom level and individual level. The different structural levels of school systems are closely linked to each other. The linkage is operated in a way that the output of an upper level set the conditions (inputs) of the lower level. The theoretical foundation is based on Parsons' (1960a, 1960b) work which distinguishes organizations into three levels: technical, managerial and institutional. For Parsons, the influences of each level pass across to the adjacent levels. Dreeben and Barr, following this scheme, more specifically point out how each level influences each other. For example, school administration allocates time to classroom teachers, and in turn teachers make decisions within classrooms on how to use time, and as a result the instructional time allows teachers to cover the curriculum, which promotes students' learning (Gamoran and Dreeben

1986; Gamoran, Secada and Merrett 2000: 39).

Teaching behaviors, from the perspective of this Coupling model, are affected by the other levels. Dreeben (1973) points out that though “the members of the top administrative echelons have little *direct* contact with teachers and little *direct* influence on the style and content of their daily work activities,” (1973: 452), teachers are influenced by the school level discretion through setting the conditions of their work. For instance, the administrative office has decision making power on curricular, class size, lesson schedule affairs which are constraints of teaching (Dreeben 1973, Dreeben and Barr 1977; Gamoran and Dreeben 1986). Therefore, the administrative or school level can influence instruction in an indirect way. In spite of it, Dreeben also claims that teachers are not working in a highly bureaucratic structure.

Dreeben suggests that teachers are not working in a bureaucratic organization as much literature views. Instead, teachers’ work contains some non-bureaucratic elements (Dreeben 1973). He distinguishes classroom, the immediate teachers’ work site, as the most important element of all. Due to the vaguely defined educational goals, there is a lack of measurable instructions for teachers to follow so as to accomplish the educational goal. The activities of teachers in the classroom—instruction and class management—are not primarily determined by the top official decisions. Besides, the uncertainty of classroom environment (Lortie 1965; Jackson 1968) makes the work of teacher in the class “non-bureaucratic”. It is because bureaucratic rules and regulations are not capable of covering all unpredictable and unknown exigencies which teachers have to cope with in a classroom. The degree of conformity to the school or educational goal is

constrained by the immediate situation. Finally, the effectiveness is hard to measure in real teaching situation. The standards of good teaching are ill-defined (Dreeben 1973). Yet, it does not imply that instruction is free from external influence.

Despite of the limited influence of official decisions to classroom level, Dreeben points out that the community is an external factor which influences classroom activities, indirectly but considerably. Using a functional perspective, he suggests that social class and the expectations of parents are some examples that influence the classroom event daily and constrain the work of teacher. Dreeben's work (2000) on the structural effects on students' learning provides us a systematic organizational analysis to study the daily work of teachers.

According to this perspective, teaching is conceived as being carried out in a part of a configuration in a closely coupled structure. Classroom teaching is not isolated from its environment and not free from external influences. Teaching, in this analogy, is controlled by activities formally or informally in school or even societal level. It seems convincing to suggest that teachers' behavior is, to a certain extent, constrained by some structural forces (Dreeben 2000). Teachers as the major actors in the organization who arrange their work consistency and maximize teaching effectiveness by conforming to the rules and regulations set by the organization. Here, contrasting with the previous analysis, teachers working in the organization have little autonomy. They are controlled and constrained by the structure of the organization.

However, the coupling model suggested by Dreeben has some shortcomings. Firstly, the problem of the "process" of teaching remains uninformed.

In other words, given the structural constraints or conditions of teaching, it has not explained how teaching is carried out. Secondly, it is assumed that the flow of influence is uni-directional. This linear analogy ignores the complexity of the process of teaching which we have mentioned before. The actors taking part in the process have their own interpretations, reflections and reactions to the external constraints. The rationality of the actors will turn out influencing the whole process and (re)shaping the structure. It is a continuous bargaining and interplay of all parts in the system. We should not take the teaching process for granted and blanket it; rather, it is necessary to find out the behavioral patterns and action rationality of the main actors involved. Therefore, the process of teaching can be unfolded by examining teachers' daily work.

2.1.3 Contributions of Functional Perspective

So far, I have covered the main argument of functionalism and reviewed some of the important organizational research and findings. Functionalism puts great emphasis on the fine segregation of labor and function and the importance of interplay of the parts. School organization is organized in a way to serve technical or social functions—the fulfillment of the demands or needs of society. Specifically, it views teachers as an agent carrying value and knowledge imposed by society. He/she does not work in an autonomous environment, even inside classroom. On the contrary, his/her work is, to some extent, constrained and conditioned by the larger society. Functionalism emphasizes the normative or institutional role and expectations of education including teachers defined and shaped by the wider society. As a socializing agent, their constraints in work are for the sake of attaining the expected outcome of classroom teaching rather than a resistance against the influence of the teachers' personality.

From the functionalist point of view, teaching as the organizational behaviors is interconnected with the other levels of the formal structure. Teaching task in schooling is socially controlled and constrained by the formal structure in the school level or even societal level. Those organizational constraints of teaching include the curriculum, resources and physical setting of the classroom and school. The working environment of teachers includes the influences from societal level or school level, which are all determinants of how teachers organize their work. Along this argument, the organization of teaching is closely correlated with the formal structure.

Following the line of functionalism, teachers working in school organization also play a role which is functional to the whole organization or even the society. Their work is functional to the organization's survival. Also, they do not work independently. They work in place influenced by other structure. It assumes that teachers organize their work according to the expected role of teacher -- teaching. All teachers have consensus on their work and educational beliefs. Also from the functional point of view, teachers are working in the organization which is to transmit and reproduce the values in the larger society as school is one of the most important and effective places where socialization takes place. Then teachers are the major socializing agent who participates in the process of socialization of students in daily schooling process.

2.1.4 Critiques of Functional Perspective

However, functionalism is criticized for being ignorant of the conflicts of interest in society. It has not dealt with the question like "functional to whom". For

instance, we assume that teachers are transmitting the social value of society, but who are defining the “knowledge” to be taught and learnt? While teachers are teaching the student the social norms or value, who will benefit the most from it? When teachers organize their work according to the organizational goals, does it mean that all individual teachers hold the same and consistent goals with the organization? Do they simply act as conformists? This perspective overlooks the diversified and sometimes conflicting interests in the organization, and even the society.

On top of it, functionalism is also attacked by not tackling the problem of “origin”. It assumes that there exist “determined” or “defined” values or social norms which are taught in formal schooling and informal education. Who define the social norms? Who, if any, are beneficial from the values or norms? Are the norms or values beneficial to teachers? Functionalism falls short of explaining the origin of the social values and norms. Functional-Organizational analysis assumes that the actors in the organization will act according to organizational goals. It neglects the rationality of the actors and fails to explain to whom these functions are benefited. Also, regarding school as a coupled organization, this analysis has not examined and explained the way teachers organize their work in daily practice. It just takes the process of teaching carried out in classroom everyday for granted. But how do they teach? Are the administrative or other non-teaching tasks and responsibilities also functional to the organization, or the larger society? If so, how are they being functional? How do teachers perceive their work?

Following this line of thought of functional perspective, teaching as the main organizational context is a social occasion much taken for granted. It either

oversimplifies the organization of teaching, or considers teachers working passively. The formal control sets the constraints of teachers in their practice. Yet, it falls short of further explaining how teachers react to the uncertain and complex process during teaching under these constraints. Do they react to the working environment in the same way? Or do they have different coping strategies? How do these factors affect their real teaching and their beliefs towards teaching? Those questions remain unattended.

Furthermore, this vertical flow of influence implies teaching practices change along with the organizational environment; yet, it may be not the case we find in reality. Though innovations in pedagogies are suggested in educational reforms, there is still little change in real practices (Jackson 1968; Lortie 1975; Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1992). Teachers are always regarded as rather conservative (Lortie 1975). As such, how do teachers react to the external world as well as maintain the stability in their work? It is interesting to find out the forces that shape teachers' behaviors and beliefs in the organization.

2.2 Conflict Perspective on Organizational Analysis

In response to functionalism, conflict perspective points out that society is full of conflicts of interest—with the powerful one dominating the powerless. The powerful holds the scarce resources of society. The social norms and values of society are all serving their interests while at the same time conflicting with the interests of the powerless. From the conflict perspective, society is struggling through the conflicts between the powerful and the powerless. The powerful may compose of a small portion of the population but they have the power to control over the vast majority in society consolidating their power and privileges. Therefore,

social control is the means the powerful use to internalize the values and norms to the mass, and as a result legitimizing their seize of power.

Karl Marx is one of the prominent masters of the conflict school. Though we hardly find educational issues in his immense literature, his ideologies give us insights into this train of thought. He suggests that in the capitalist society, there are two classes: dominating class and working class. The dominating class consolidates their power by exploiting the working class who hold very little resources. This domination of the capitalists happens in every part of society. Among them, education is a core mechanism for the consolidation of the bourgeois, the dominating class in society. Pierre Bourdieu's work on education, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction" (1973) explains the way education functions as a social control by the upper class. He claims that schooling process is indeed a reproduction of social structure. Upper class students, who have cultural capital, will be more adaptable to the schooling process and, as a result, will have a better chance of being successful in the education system. Both Karl Marx's and Bourdieu's works seem to provide us an answer to solve the questions arisen from functionalist analysis.

Weber is the classic sociologist to use conflict perspective on organizational analysis. His work on bureaucracy (1946, 1947 trans.) has long been an influential academic theory bringing insights into many fields of sociology. To Weber, bureaucracy is the most prevailing form of organization in modern society and he pinpoints some features of this most prevalent form of organization. Scott (1998) extracts some common administrative characteristics present in bureaucratic forms: (a) a fixed division of labor among participants; (b) a hierarchy of offices; (c) a set of general rules that govern performance; (d) a separation of personal from

official property and rights; (e) selection of personnel on the basis of technical qualifications; and (f) employment viewed as a career by participants (Scott 1998: 45). All bureaucratic organizations have very fine division of labor divided both functionally and hierarchically in order to attain the organizational goals effectively and efficiently.

Randall Collins, a Weberian sociologist, in his work “Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification” (1971) criticizes technical functionalism for asserting that education is for technical functions to society. Technical functionalism claims that the expansion of educational system all over the world is due to the actual needs and technical requirements of the occupational structure. Collins (1971) convincingly argues that the market tends to employ candidates whose educational qualifications exceed the actual requirements and practical needs of the job. However, credentials do lay an important role in the society for their symbolic meaning rather than technical or practical one (Collins 1979).

Collins finds that employers seeking workers do not really mind what the latter really learn in college or at school. But they do count what credentials or qualifications the candidates hold. In order to attain the credentials, people tend to further their education. Expansion of education, as such, is found all over the world in modern educational system, not due to the advanced technology required in current job market, but the desire to acquire credentials for a better status in the stratified society. This “diploma disease” (1976), as Dore suggests, is prevalent in modern world under the name of social development. Therefore, Collins (1979) names this phenomena “credentialism”. The concept of credentialism is one of the

key elements of the analysis of teaching practices and beliefs in Hong Kong. It affirms that the symbolic function of credentials in many cases overrides the actual functions demonstrated by an improvement in performance. The semiotics of the credentials commonly shared in wider society is important for the public to distinguish “qualified” graduates or teachers.

2.2.1 Bureaucratic Model

In school organization, according to the conflict perspective, the superordinates in the school have the power to control over the subordinates. For example, the principal could influence upon teachers’ work. The powerful group are generally referred to the policy makers and educational board who rule over the educational policies. Curriculum, for example, is the powerful tools to manipulate teachers’ work (for example, Apple 1979, 1988; Young 1971; Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett 1982; Wong 1991; Stevenson and Baker 1991). Teachers are viewed as subordinates working in school organization—people of little power with their work monitored by the superordinate officials.

In Hong Kong, some studies look at the educational system from a conflict perspective, focusing on the control of the curriculum of the dominating class in society (Morris 1977; Lai 1999). Morris (1997), one of the leading scholars studying curriculum development in Hong Kong, finds that the state and the market play a central role in school. He argues that “the curriculum continues to manifest those characteristics which emerged in the early postwar period, which was characterized by direct state control” (1997: 329). As a result, the knowledge in the formal schooling is controlled by the state. From selecting and allocating students, distributing time to school subjects, arranging the assessment to assigning the

homework, the state uses all tools to maneuver the schooling process. This is Apple (1979) called “logic of technical control”.

2.2.2 Conflict of Interests

Willard Waller in his book *Sociology of Teaching* (1932) considers closely what he called “institutional” attributes in this account of teaching (Bidwell 1965: 978). Using a conflict point of view, Waller deems all parties in the education system to have conflicts of interests with each other. Teachers are always facing a dilemma in their formal teaching process: one being the promotion of order, and the other the promotion of learning. In order to promote order, it is better for teachers to discipline the students to behave well in the classroom. To maintain an ordered environment, teachers have to make some classroom rules for students. Setting rules to monitor behaviors of students, especially during the first lesson of the term, is found to be effective to maintain a good classroom order (Doyle 1986). On the other hand, to promote learning, teachers have to build up a good relationship with their students to motivate learning. To Waller, although the two tasks reinforce each other in the process of teaching, they put teachers into a dilemma in the daily work. Bidwell (1965) concludes Waller’s findings claiming “the intrinsic nature of teaching runs counter to the bureaucratic principle of school organization and that, paradoxically, to perform adequately in his office the teacher is forced to violate the rules of performance” (Bidwell 1965: 979). Waller’s contribution towards the two parallel but contradicting tasks of teachers is inspiring. His observation reinforces the impression of the inconsistent and uncertain nature in teachers’ work.

Waller also points out that the subcultures of teachers and students are shaped by the conflict relations (Bidwell 1965: 980). The performance of a school

hinges on how well they handle the internal conflicts caused between different groups and levels. Teachers, as well as the administrators, try their best to demonstrate a harmonic schooling environment to the public by enclosing the conflicts within the school to avoid disclosing them to the other parties. Waller's view on "non-bureaucratic" nature of school and teachers' work is in alignment with Dreeben's argument mentioned previously.

Furthermore, Waller argued that openness of schools affects their structures and activities (Bidwell 1965: 1009). The relationship between the school and its environment has been a main field of study in the sociology of organization. Waller was one of the pioneer scholars to discover the functions of the environment to the inner operation and the legitimacy of the school organization. The environment here means some social groups like parents, local community, and educational policy. These groups affect teachers' behaviors indirectly. Their influences penetrate the structure of educational system and seep into the everyday work of teachers. Thus, the teaching behaviors are constrained by the wider environment.

2.2.3 Contributions of Conflict Perspective

The work of Collins on the idea of "credentialism" (1979) is insightful to our discussion on the work of teachers. In recent years, the claim for professionalization is prevailing in all careers all over the world. The ideology of professionalism is now probably the most prominent ideological issue shaping teachers' work (Legters 2001: 423). Under this powerful ideology, teachers are expected to obtain certain educational qualifications and certifications. For example, the number of teachers participating in activities or workshops in the name of "professional development" increases at top speed. After those courses or programs,

they will acquire a professional recognition. The acquisition of credentials, as Collins (1971, 1979) claims, is a consequence of status competition for upward mobility in the social stratification rather than the empirical requirement of the work technically. More specifically, the qualifications or certificates per se may not necessarily lead to the improvement of teaching effectiveness or quality. Yet by obtaining those credentials as a symbolic proof, one is able to climb to a higher place. In fact, it is not difficult to find that teachers who graduate from the education faculty of a well-known tertiary institution receive more respects and better appraisal from the general public and the employers.

Moreover, Weber evokes the importance of “interpretation” in social actions. The interpretive approach allows us to view the same “social facts” from the perspectives of the actors in social actions. Similarly, to obtain a comprehensive account of the structure and reality of school organization, inter-subjectivity is essential and necessary. In response to the lack of teachers’ perspective in the local educational discussion, it is useful to examine the organization from the point of view of teacher. By doing so, I wish that this research can provide one more approach to study the teachers’ working lives and the school organization in Hong Kong.

2.2.4 Critiques of Conflict Perspective

Conflict perspective provides us an understanding of the mechanism and origin of control in organizations. We know that the hierarchical structure is a constraint in teachers’ work. It assumes that the subordinates are all conformists to the power relations. Some research, however, finds that teachers have their zone of autonomy in actual work place. They have their authority regime or arena and make

decisions by themselves. It is also found that their decision-making process is rarely affected by authority structure (Lortie (1975) and Jackson (1968) found that the official power structure has limited effects on teachers' work, especially in classroom). How do they organize their work then? What is the role played by non-teaching tasks and responsibilities? Are they, as claimed by conflict perspective, also a means of control? If teachers have their own zone of autonomy, do they act consistently with the organizational goals?

2.3 Critiques of Functional and Conflict Perspectives

Though the functional and conflict perspectives seem to be contradictory to each other, they have several points in common. First of all, most of them focus on the informal structure of the organization with an exception of technical functionalism believing that the technical and formal structure does serve social needs, and that the informal structure may also shape greatly the organizational behaviors and beliefs. Sometimes, the effect of the informal structure is in a sense greater than the formal structure which we all expect. Therefore, though functional and conflict perspectives are different in defining and identifying the informal structure and the way these structural factors affect organizational behaviors, they all believe that the informal structure plays an important role in shaping the practices and beliefs of the social beings in the organization.

Based on this view, on the contrary, the role of the formal structure is sometimes downplayed to a position which is secondary to informal structure. However, if the formal structure performs a minimal function in the organization, how can it still survive and reproduce in society? We can see that many organizations also pay much attention to the formal structure; how can we make sense of it? Does

it imply that the formal structure still plays an important role in the survival of the organization while the informal structure is performing its functions? It seems too early to dismiss the functions and significance of the formal structure.

Besides, the functional and conflict perspectives have not placed enough focus on the process of teaching and teachers' work in their organizational analysis. Teaching is the core technical function of the school organization and teachers are the main actors in the organization. The theories allow us to understand the factors affecting teaching. Yet, we know little about how teachers organize teaching. Moreover, as teachers, they have to deal with many tasks besides teaching. How do they perceive these kinds of work and how does this perception affect teaching? There is little literature researching on the daily work of teachers. This research intends to make sense of the teachers' daily work and the organization.

2.4 Neo-institutional Perspective and Organizational Analysis

2.4.1 Decoupling Model

Neo-institutionalism views the organization with a totally different perspective from the above organization theories. It tries to uncover the role played by the formal structure and finds that its role is exhibited in its symbolic notion rather than technical part. Bidwell (1965) was the first scholar observing the "structural looseness" of a school: the formal structure of school being loosely linked to daily activities. Specifically, he explains:

"The teachers work alone within the classroom, relatively hidden from colleagues and superiors, so that he [or she] has a board discretionary jurisdiction within the boundaries of he classroom. Similarly, the school units of a school system are relatively autonomous, so that teaching and administrative

personnel of a school also enjoy board discretionary powers concerning the procedures to be employed during the period of time that students are assigned to that school....Thus, school systems must operating in the interests of sequence and uniformity, not simply partially dispersed, but structurally discrete and relatively independent subunits” (1965: 976).

All subunits of schools are loosely coupled in a school institute. Weick (1976, 1982) and Meyer and Rowan (1978, 1992) further examine decoupling model which casts light on the relationship of formal structure and actual activities in organization. By elaborating the characteristic of structural looseness of modern organization suggested by Bidwell (1965) and March and Olsen (1976), the scholars claim that the formal structure of school organization is loosely coupled, and in some cases even decoupled with daily practices.

The term “loosely coupled” means that “structure is disconnected from technical (work) activity, and activity is disconnected from its effects” (Meyer and Rowan 1978, 1992: 71). They explain in greater detail that “[s]tructural elements are only loosely linked to each other and to activities; rules are often violated; decisions are often unimplemented, or if implemented have uncertain consequences; technologies are of problematic efficiency, and evaluation and inspection systems are subverted or rendered so vague as to provide little coordination” (1992: 72). To show the loose coupling of structure and activities, Meyer and Rowan give evidence on the failure of patterns of control in the formal structure. Due to the lack of teaching technology or detailed instructional program, teachers are not controlled by technological control. They contend that teaching is isolated, independent and free from evaluation and there is a lack of coordination and control over technical interdependencies.

According to this theory, the emphasis of the organizational environment has shifted from a technical one to an institutional one. Technical environment, or sometimes regarded as the “organizational environment”, focuses on the technical exchange such as skills, techniques, information and resources of the social organizations to improve their technical performance or effectiveness. The exchange is closely related to the empirical needs or requirements of the organization. On the other hand, institutional environment of the organization is a cultural or ideological system. It contains defined programs, scripts or schemas of social actions and penetrates the formal structure of organization as a package. For instance, the definition of a “good student” is highly institutionalized in the ideological or cultural level which is commonly shared by every participant within and across organizations. It is not an organizational creation yet is, indeed, shaping the perceptions and thus behaviors of every individual in society.

Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1992) claim the ritual categories are a set of highly institutionalized schooling rules embedded in the institutional environment of the organization. For example, students’ grade level, teachers’ qualifications, curriculum and the personnel of the school are well-defined ritual categories of the educational system. Individuals take them for granted as the main components in the formal schooling process. All ritual categories are highly institutionalized in the educational structure and are shaping the form of the structure. By the incorporation of those institutionalized classifications, school organization, as Meyer and Rowan suggest, can gain legitimacy and maintain its certainty.

By decoupling formal structures from activities, uncertainty about the

effectiveness of the ritual categories is reduced. The school system presents with little evidence of ineffectiveness, conflicts or inconsistency. School as an institution in modern society is consolidated by the logic of confidence: “Parties bring to each other the taken-for-granted, good faith assumption that the other is, in fact, carrying out his or her defined activity” (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1992: 90). On the other hand, to maintain legitimacy, schools are tightly coupled upon the ritual classifications. They incorporate institutional rules such as credential system, grade levels and school subjects into the organization so that they appear to function as what society expects.

2.4.2 Teaching in Decoupling Structure

From this point of view, teaching in classroom is decoupled with other organizational structures. Teachers work in an isolated area which avoids supervision and evaluation. This perspective agrees on the research that the cooperation between individual teachers is minimal. However, we can see that they organize their work in a similar way. Lortie (1975) uses the idea of “cellular structure” to describe the sameness in different closed classrooms. Jackson (1968) notes an almost ritual sameness in classroom instruction. Goodlad (1984) describes the remarkable homogeneity of classroom teaching practices; whereas Cuban (1984) notes the persistence of teacher-centered practices in American schools. Rowan (1995) reports that the majority of high school teachers in his study of teachers’ work practices reported that their work was routine (Rowan and Miskel 1999). For example, the form of teaching they used in class did not vary much from each other. Rowan and Miskel claim that the “for institutional theorist, the routine nature of teaching is a strong indication that teaching practices in American schools are institutionalized; as such, an important issue is to be studied: the factors that stabilize and institutionalize

these practices” (1999: 373). This research attempts to find out the stabilizing factors in Hong Kong school organization.

Moreover, the consistency of teaching behavior is very high that there are few changes or innovations on pedagogy despite much publication on this kind. And those amendments often fail to be implemented in real teaching. We can see a high level of certainty of teaching practices. Research also shows that teachers hold similar attitudes and beliefs in their work place. Hargreaves (1984) depicts that teachers seldom draw on their own experience when making educational decisions. It proves there are some kinds of teaching norms and beliefs present among teachers themselves. Institutionalism also suggests that teachers co-operate each other by assuming that the others are performing their parts well. Thus, we can see there is also a decoupling between the daily work of teacher and what is expected in the formal structure.

Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1978, 1992) claim that the decoupling of structure can maintain the legitimacy of educational organization in several ways: first, the avoidance of close inspection can consequently increase the commitments of the internal participants; second, as the educational goal and instructional technology are too vague to measure and evaluate, the avoidance of close inspection and evaluation arises from the fact that “a good deal of the value of education has little to do with the efficiency of instructional activities” (Meyer and Rowan 1978, 1992: 88); third, the decoupling of structure protects the formal structure from being uncertain in its technical core; and forth, it allows schools to adapt to inconsistent and conflicting institutionalized rules. To avoid the disclosure of the inconsistency and ineffectiveness, the ritual classifications embedded in the institutional

environment are incorporated into the formal structure of school organization.

According to Meyer (1973, 1977), the structure is loosely coupled in order to gain “logic of confidence” (Meyer 1970) from the public. The logic of confidence refers to “parties bring[ing] to each other the taken-for-granted, good-faith assumption that the other is, in fact, carrying out his or her defined activity.... None of these people can say what the other does or produces, but the plausibility of their activity requires that they have confidence in each other” (Meyer and Rowan 1978, 1992: 24). The ritual classifications including effective teaching are assumed to be taken place inside classroom by the public as well as all the actors in the organization. It is achieved through believing on the rational myth in the institutionalized environment. Along with this argument, teachers organize their work for the sake of attaining legitimacy such as the professional recognition from society.

Meyer and Rowan (1978, 1992) claim that the most visible aspect of the logic of confidence in the educational system is the “myth of teacher professionalism” (1978, 1992: 91). In the decoupling structure of school, the bureaucracy inspects and controls the instructional activities—only the superficial and categorical aspects of teachers. Professionalism then “serves the requirements of confidence and good faith...[T]he myth of teachers’ professionalism helps to justify the confidence placed in teachers and to legitimate the buffering of uncertainty in the performance of pupils and teachers in educational organizations” (Meyer and Rowan 1978, 1992: 91-92). More specifically, the idea of professionalism becomes an ideology among teaching profession. Teachers believe that they are professionals who deserve a large extent of autonomy in their work. From the institutional perspective, this claim or ideology just provides teachers with a buffer preventing

them from being inspected and evaluated from the others.

2.4.3 Contributions and Critiques of Neo-institutionalism

Neo-institutionalism provides us an alternative lens to view the organizational structure of school. First, it points out the loosely technical coordination within the structural elements inside school which functions as maintaining survival and legitimacy of the educational institution on the one hand, and on the other hand avoiding the disclosure of internal inconsistencies in the organization. This is useful to explain the incongruence between beliefs and practices in school reality.

Second, it highlights the importance of the examination of daily practices, which is always overlooked in many educational studies. Only by understanding the school reality and in this research, the actual routine work of teachers can we build any further educational plans and ideals. From the neo-institutional perspective, the daily activities may not be definitely as tightly related and closely oriented to the organizational goals or educational ideals as commonly beliefs. The theory suggests that the teaching practices and beliefs may be organized upon some ritual classifications which are highly institutionalized in the cultural level.

Following this point of view, it also raises the importance of looking at the non-teaching (such as administrative work) of the organization, which functions as upholding and supporting the formal structure so that the school can gain legitimacy from the society. The non-teaching work has long been treated as residual category in educational discussion. Yet, the role it plays in the institution seems as central as formal teaching from the neo-institutional perspective. The non-teaching work

though is not regarded as the core function of the organization, it affects the core function and survival of the organization in a large extent. Thus, this research intends to examine both the functions of the formal teaching and non-teaching work of teachers in Hong Kong.

Neo-institutionalism does have its theoretical limitations. First, it downplays the structural or relational factors which may be seen as the main factors that shape the organizational behaviors. Neo-institutional perspective focuses heavily on the social or institutional construction of reality. It takes a risk of over-emphasis on the ritualistic or constructionist side of social fact. Nevertheless, the complexity of social reality could not be formed out of one shaping forces. This research does not intend to swap away all other structural factors but to provide an alternative insight to analyze teachers' work in school organization.

Moreover, while focusing on a macro or institutional perspective, the micro or individual level is ill developed. Though it is convincing to suggest that the institutional environment exert influence on the day-to-day practices, it fails to explain how it functions in reality. More specifically, provided that teaching behaviors may be shaped by institutional forces, how is the process? How do the individuals react to it?

This research intends to find out the daily practices of teachers, focusing on both teaching and non-teaching works. I will employ neo-institutional perspective as my guiding theory so as to examine how teaching behaviors and beliefs are shaped so that teachers can survive and maintain certainty in their inconsistent and uncertain work place. Facing the fluctuating working environment, teachers in Hong Kong are

experiencing the intensification of work. They are the most frontline educators who deserve our attention, concern and respect. I hope this research serves as a starting point to study teachers' work lives in Hong Kong.

Now, I have just reviewed some organizational theories and models about the structure of school organization. The theories provide some enlightening ideas for the organization of daily work of teachers working in the organization. Those theories provide different accounts of teachers together with their work and locate their work differently in the organization. In this research, I will employ the neo-institutional perspective to explore the way teachers in Hong Kong organize their work and to locate teachers and their daily work in the organizational structure. I argue that the teaching practices and beliefs of teachers in Hong Kong are shaped by an institutional environment through incorporating the ritual classifications into their daily practices. Teachers have developed some coping strategies so as to maintain the certainty in their work. They not only incorporate the institutionalized rules into their teaching practices from the institutional environment in which the school is embedded, but also proactively cope with and resist those rules to re-shape the environment.

CHAPTER 3

Conceptual Framework and Methodological Design

This methodological chapter contains two parts: first, the conceptual framework, and second, the methodological design. I adopt the neo-institutional perspective and organizational analysis as the framework to study the organization of teaching in Hong Kong. In the second part, the methodological approach will be introduced.

3.1 Conceptual Framework

Neo-institutional theory suggest that the organizational structure is “decoupled”- “structure is disconnected from technical (work) activity, and activity is disconnected form its effect” (Meyer and Rowan 1978). March and Olsen (1984) observe the empirical anomalies (Powell and DiMaggio 1991:3) in the organizational theory: “what we observe in the world is inconsistent with the ways in which contemporary theories ask us to talk” (1984: 747). Education as a highly legitimated institution with religious-like characters in modern society, its structure is also decoupled (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1992).

Teachers are working in a decoupling structure daily. Their behaviors are not only connected to, but also constructed by the institutional environment (Meyer and Scott 1992: 1). That means they organize their work around some well-defined and highly institutionalized elements which is universalistic and highly standardized. Their working environments are some cultural systems defining and legitimating their structure, adding creation and maintenance. It is institutional in nature rather

than technical, as claimed by some organizational theories. The official influence or the power structure has been proven to have little impact on teachers' daily work. The teaching practices and beliefs are constrained by their institutional environment. The interviews conducted to inquire teachers about their daily and routine practices and their perception and goal in education may help us identify the institutional constraints in their work.

3.1.1 Incorporation of Ritual Classifications

“Ritual classifications” are incorporated in their daily practices. Meyer and Rowan (1978, 1992) have more specific description and explanation on the ritual classifications: “In contrast to instructional activities, there seem to be centralized and enforced agreements on exactly what teachers, students, and topics of instruction constitute a particular school” (1992: 76). Bidwell (1965) and Dreeben (1973) observe the categorized grouping of students according to their age or ability. It seems that the classification and grouping of children into different classes according to their age has been institutionalized in the educational systems around the world. These classifications are one of the examples of the taken-for-granted categories which Meyer and Rowan (1978, 1992) dubbed “ritual classifications”. On top of student classifications, Meyer and Rowan identify other classifications which the functioning of their symbolic attributes is remarkable.

The organization does not exchange with its environment for its technical contribution or functioning; rather, it is just an enactment of rationalized myths prescribed in the institutional environment. Teachers in different yet isolated classrooms seem to teach similar topics, and students learn many of the same things” (Meyer and Rowan 1978, 1992: 76). The myth is “rationalized” because it is

structurally and collectively defined and highly standardized. The rationalized institutional structure is incorporated into the organization as packaged codes. For example, it is believed that pre-job training is practically necessary for ensuring effective teaching; likewise, to be professional and qualified teachers, they must participate in different kinds of professional activities or course (or at least, they have to be graduates of a recognized tertiary institution). Yet, the impact and symbolic meaning of the professional certifications and recognitions outweigh that of the practical skills and teaching methods teachers learn in the training.

The incorporation of the rational myths or ritual rules will lead to the legitimization by the public, and in this context, Meyer has called it the “logic of confidence” (Meyer 1970). It means that once the ritual classifications are properly incorporated and arranged in the school organization, the public, by looking at these symbolic elements, will believe that all parties are doing their job properly and the organization as a whole is running effectively. For instance, the number of students who gets “8As” in the Hong Kong Certificate Education Examination (HKCEE) is the legitimate indicator of a “good” school; the banding of a secondary school also signifying the performance of the school; the percentage of the teaching staff who gets a degree in a well known university is one of the indicators of professional teaching. The logic of confidence refers to the social fact that the perception or the variety of evaluations of the public toward school depends on these labels in a large extent. It will consequently generate some real effects such as altering the decision and action of individual and the public as a result. Therefore, the logic of confidence is not merely personal orientations but is also institutional in character (Meyer and Rowan 1992: 91).

“Professionalism” is a prevailing ideology highly institutionalized in modern society. It rationalized and prescribed the properties of the teaching profession including teacher licensing and the social roles and expectations of these professionals. For example, teachers expect and are all expected to maintain a high level of autonomy in their work especially in formal teaching. It is often difficult to conduct inspection and evaluation of instructional work. When these rules of professionalism are grouped together properly (such as attaining a education degree in chartered institution, a certification of attendance of pedagogical or subject workshops or courses), “professional and effective teaching” is understood to occur. The ideology of professionalism links the institutional level and individual level by the proper assembly of some “professionalism elements”. These ritualistic elements include teaching licensing, expertise skills (such as I.T., school management), a university degree and the implementation of project learning. It is important to note that the classifications are not only shared within the organization but also in the wider society. In this research, I will try to examine if the ritual classifications exist in teachers’ perceptions of their day-to-day work including formal teaching.

3.1.2 Theory of Practical Action

If teachers organize their teaching work rationally, their actions are rational with a clear goal and orientation. However, as claimed by DiMaggio and Powell (1991), “the new institutionalism is based on the micro level on that what we have called a theory of practical action. By this we [the authors] mean that a set of orienting principles that reflect the cognitive turn in contemporary social theory” (1991: 22). It means that the orientation seems to turn to more of a cognitive action rather than a purely rational action. The most essential distinction between them is that the former is rather out of the individual actor’s orientation while the latter is a

result of some taken-for-granted, programmed actions. It is comparable to the “habits” in our daily lives (Bellah 1986), not grounded in our rational decision-making, but we act as part of our internal “program”. Similarly, individuals in the modern organizations act more as if their actions are scripted or programmed, that is, more as a kind of practical actions than rational actions as often prescribed and argued in bureaucratic model.

Not all the actions in modern organizations are practical actions. Powell and DiMaggio (1991) and Meyer and Scott (1991) point out that the more institutionalized environment, the greater the roles of practical reason. On the contrary, the more technically developed environment, the greater role for discursive and analytic cognition. For example, it is easy to understand that a manufactory factory is technically well developed. The skills and techniques are substantial and technical. The actions of the individuals in the factory organization are less likely to have practical elements. On the contrary, in a highly institutionalized organization like school, the practical elements of the social actions become greater. More specifically, the organizational behavior, particularly decision making, involves rule following more than calculation of consequences (Powell and DiMaggio 1991: 19).

Putting the theory of practical action into the context of teachers’ work, their actions are regarded as scripted, routine and taken-for-granted behaviors. The rational choice is largely governed by the culture system elements—elements being “practical, semi-automatic, [and] non-calculative” (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 24) which require a limited rational thinking of the actor during the course of action. The actor’s decision making process is constrained by some highly institutionalized forces which may go beyond the individual’s discretion. It is different from the

voluntaristic action theory suggested by Parsons (1937) for it emphasizes the practical and routine nature of a social action rather than the rational one. Therefore, we have to distinguish it from rational actions in a bureaucratic model, and also from normative actions in Parsons' actions theory.

Parsons' contribution on the integration of cultural system into the personality system (Parsons 1951, 1971, 1982; DiMaggio and Powell 1991) is worth-mentioning as it pinpoints the important role of the cultural system in social actions. Neo-institutional theorists claim that, in the modern organizations, the actions are more likely to be routine, taken-for-granted practices rather than rational discretions of the individuals. It is also noteworthy to distinguish the nature of practical actions from utilitarian and calculative actions, and the mechanical actions in bureaucratic organization. The social actions in bureaucracy are featured as impersonal, mechanical and inflexible as a result of irrationality of actions in the organization because individuals lack personal choices and rational decision making. All individuals act according to the structured division of labor thought to bring upon organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

In contrast, the actors, from the neo-institutional perspective, are semi-rational. They are "rational" in a sense that they cognitively and consciously make decisions on what they should do in the organizational context. Rules and norms that are universally shared are usually well institutionalized in modern organizations, and therefore mostly regarded as rational undertakings. They are "irrational" in a sense that the decisions made may not necessarily direct to organizational efficiency and effectiveness. In case of Hong Kong, teachers will take for granted that to be legitimized, they have to take some courses about their work

such as student psychology, pedagogical innovations. They would doubt less the function or objectives of these courses to improve the technical performances in their work. But it seems that teachers seldom consider the actual functions and improvements of the technology of school organization or learning and teaching effectiveness after they attain a professional recognition. They act as if the actions are programmed and “rule-like” leading to collectively defined ends. Practical actions, as Powell and DiMaggio (1991) claim, are prevailing in modern organizations.

3.1.3 Institutional Construction of Interests

Powell and DiMaggio (1991) claims that “actors and their interests are institutionally constructed” (1991: 22) and Scott (1991) contends that “institutional frameworks define the ends and shape the means by which interests are determined and pursue” (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 28). The interests have to be distinguished from the “interests” in the conflict perspective. The latter refers to the utilitarian or calculative benefits which usually mean materialist benefits. The term “interest” in the institutional theory, on the other hand, has normative connotation. It refers to the stance or attitudes which the profession holds towards certain social facts. For example, teachers may think that it is their obligation to protect the students in a school picnic. It is also a part of “interest” of teachers defining the boundary of responsibilities and role expectations of teachers.

The interests of teachers are institutionally constructed meaning that whatever a “teacher” or a “good or bad teacher” or a “qualified or professional teacher” or an “English teacher” is perceived as, and his or her corresponding teaching practices and beliefs are already pre-defined in the institutional environment.

For instance, it is commonly agreed that a qualified college English teacher should have obtained a formal teaching training qualification and graduated in the English department. He/she should also know the college syllabus or the practicality of the content very well. The roles and norms of a legitimated “qualified”, “college”, “English”, “teacher” are scripted and programmed in the cultural or ideological system that are well incorporated by members of the organization and the society as a package into their daily teaching practices and beliefs. The interests may not necessarily be a rational discretion of an individual teacher; in contrast, they can be solely some taken-for-granted scripts or schemas which shape the teaching behaviors and perceptions of their behavior in school organization.

It is noteworthy that “professionalism” is a prevailing taken-for-granted ideology or movement among the teaching profession all over the world since the 20th century (Legster 2001). The ideology, to a large extent, may define and shape the work experiences and more importantly, the interests and social expectation of teachers in modern educational system. It can sometimes serve as a strategy by teachers to draw boundary of their work and responsibility, so as to gain greater autonomy and improved working conditions (Legster 2001: 423). If the ideology is highly institutionalized in the wider cultural system that teachers view it as “real” and rational, the normative and functional attributes of what a profession should constitute are then defined on institutional level rather on organizational level. In other words, in this case, teachers’ identity and expectation are institutionally defined and shaped. And if the cultural properties of the teaching profession are defined on the institutional level, the contexts and meaning of them might change when the conception of society and individual change in the wider institutional environment. The ideology of professionalism might redefine accordingly. As a result, the

perceptions of teaching and their social and professional identity might be redefined as an ongoing process according to the social demands and expectations. Therefore, the ideological system of the teachers are not only institutionally shaped and defined, but also institutionally constructed.

The identity of teachers also depends on the social expectations but not on the technical work they do. That means the institutional environment is shaping their identity and legitimizing the professional status of teaching force. An educational agent, teachers have their roles, work tasks, responsibilities and authorities socially defined rather than organizationally defined. It is institutionally defined, chartered and legitimized so that teachers are believed to perform their job well (teach effectively) based on the logic of confidence. Every day, students go to school and have lessons in classroom. There is little supervision if teachers perform well and teach the formal curriculum effectively, but it is always presupposed that all students should have learnt the topic once the lesson is over. More, the public believes teachers are tightly following the schedule of the curriculum covered in every grade level. In this research, I attempt to unveil institutional forces which shape the professional identity of teachers. As such, teachers can maintain their legitimacy as a professional to ease the ineffectiveness they have in the organization.

In Chapter 4 and 5 respectively, I will apply the three concepts to analyze the work and beliefs of teachers in Hong Kong based on survey and interview data I collected. In Chapter 4, the instructional work is examined while in Chapter 5, some obstacles in teachers' work are studied. In each case, I attempt to explore several research questions: first, what are the ritual classifications embedded in the institutional environment, if any, that shape the working practices and beliefs of

teachers in Hong Kong? Second, how do Hong Kong teachers cope with uncertainties in their workplace? Do teachers develop their individual or unique coping strategies or do they act collectively? And third, how are teachers' interests and ideological values shaped? Are they shaped by forces within the organizational structure as advanced by the functionalists? Or are they shaped by the institutional environment as claimed by the neo-institutional theory? To some extent, institutionalists also argue that it is the institutional environment that upholds the survival and functioning of modern organizations; does this also hold true in the case of Hong Kong where schools certainly have been held increasingly more accountable to the public? If so, how do our Hong Kong teachers organize or perhaps, redefine their roles and professional identity in the due course? All of these are the major research concern of this research.

3.2 Methodological Design

The research adopts two basic strategies to collect data on teachers' daily working lives in Hong Kong. Before proceeding to explain the empirical methods used, the contribution of a pilot study conducted previously will be briefly addressed. A pilot study of this research was done in the February of 2002 and was found beneficial to the methodological design of this research. In the pilot study, six teachers were interviewed. The questions were semi-structured which included questions about teachers' daily work routine and their teaching beliefs; and questions were revised after the pilot study. The interview draws much attention to the obtrusive role played by the non-teaching work; it ignites also an issue deserved further investigation—perception of teachers towards their teaching as well as non-teaching work. Teachers may have different points of view and perceptions towards the two aspects of their work. The understanding of the way they organize the two aspects of their work, namely the instructional and non-instructional work to maintain certainty, is important.

In order to uncover the perception of teachers and the way they organize their daily work, three research strategies are employed: in-depth interviews are used for the major bulk of data; a questionnaire survey supplementing the interviews will provide a general picture of the situation of teachers' daily work which are then contextualized by in-depth interviews with the in-service teachers who possess different characteristics. The way teachers organize their work and the beliefs are also disclosed in the answers to the questionnaire. Therefore, I will utilize the strengths of each method to provide a more comprehensive picture of teachers' daily working lives.

3.2.1 In-depth Interviews

Eight in-depth interviews were conducted and used as the primary strategy to collect data. The characteristics of the interviewees are shown in Table 3.1. Apart from one of them conducted in a university canteen and not recorded according to the informant’s will, the others were conducted in their schools’ classrooms and recorded under the interviewees’ consents. The recorded discs have been transcribed. As the interviews had already been conducted after school period, the interviews were carried out in a relatively self-contained environment with minimal external interruptions. All interviews were exercised in February 2003.

Table 3.1 Profiles of the Interviewees⁸

<i>Secondary School</i>				
	Mr. Au	Miss Chan	Mr. Cheng	Miss Liu
Gender	M	F	M	F
Years of teaching experience	6	9	8	4
Main teaching subject	Physics	English	Economics	English
<i>Primary School</i>				
	Mr. Leung	Miss Lee	Miss Wong	Miss Yau
Gender	M	F	F	F
Years of teaching experience	12	1	2	13
Main teaching subject	General studies	Chinese, Putonghua	Mathematics, Chinese	English, Civic Education

A total of eight teachers were interviewed, with half of them from a primary and another half a secondary school. One of the primary school teachers and two of the secondary are male and the other five are female. The proportions of male to female teachers for both cases of primary and secondary school in proportion to

⁸ The names of the teachers are all anonymous.

those in the whole profession⁹. Their teaching experience (years of teaching) ranged widely from 1 to 12 years. The large variation of teaching experience allows us to have a more complete account of the points of view of the teachers. It also allows us to observe any differences among their years of experience.

The questions are divided into three main parts (Appendix I). The first part contains questions about their pedagogical practices. Pedagogical practices are essential to our understanding of teachers' work. Teachers are teaching in a physically isolated classroom free from external interruptions most of the time. To examine how teachers organize their work in this environment, I discussed with the interviewees about the form of teaching they employed in classroom and the variety of the pedagogies they adopted.

The second part of the questions focuses on the work of teachers besides classroom teaching work. It is the part always neglected in intellectual and practical discussions and studies. The daily work of teachers is not solely the technical teaching part. Actually, they are also performing other responsibilities, tasks that occupy a considerable amount of time and energy of teachers daily. It is therefore important to understand the extent and context of the effect of these tasks to teaching. It is not the aim of this research to evaluate the effect of non-teaching tasks to teaching; instead, this study tries to understand how teachers organize and give meaning to their work in daily practices and how school functions as an organization which in turn affects their beliefs, preferences, and behavioral patterns.

⁹ According to the statistics provided by the *Teacher Survey* in 1995 and 1996, the proportions of male to female teachers of primary school and secondary school from 1992 to 1996 had been around 1:3 and 1:1 respectively. It is consistent with the proportions of the interviewees. *Teacher Survey*. 1995, 1996. Hong Kong: Education Department, Statistics Section. Statistics after 1996 are absent but are estimated to be approximately the same as the above statistics.

The last part of interview questions is about teacher's beliefs and perceptions towards their work and occupation. Teaching beliefs and perceptions are important in allowing us to understand the ideological system of them. Their views and beliefs on personal career development, education objectives and the whole teaching profession can help us understand how teachers survive in work and organize their work in daily practices within an organizational context. Also, exploring and understanding their belief system will give insights into sociological knowledge of how certain practices and conventions are formed, organized, reinstitutionalized and become institutionalized again.

The interviewees were contacted through the principals of both schools. I had no control over the selection of teachers although I had first briefed the principal the objectives of this research. There are advantages to reach the interviewees through the head of a school. First of all, it is easier to contact interviewees who are willing to share their experience as the principals got an idea of the objectives of the interviews and teachers were asked to give their consents first. All interviewees were informed the confidentiality of the contents of the interviews to avoid the possibility of their giving distorted comments due to the power structure. Secondly, the teachers invited are guaranteed to be responsible who can provide information about the actual workload of a teacher daily.

This methodology has its limitations. The data obtained from teachers selected cannot be generalized to the whole profession due to the intended effort of selection; however, this research serves as an exploratory study to inquire into how teachers organize their work. It is not my intention to make a theoretical

generalization out of this study; therefore, the findings of it will serve as an exploratory research.

Furthermore, teachers were invited for interviews from two schools: one primary and one secondary school. The primary school is located in the Hong Kong Island having been established for almost 30 years, a relatively old school situated in a public housing estate. The long history of it makes it a well-known school in the area. Some of the teachers there have been teaching for more than 20 years as the school was established with the introduction of mass education. The secondary school, on the other hand, is located in an urban area of low socio-economic status resided by some new immigrants. It is a second banding school indicating that the general performance of the school is of mediocre. The two schools are situated in different districts in Hong Kong with different social environment, history and background, which will be useful information for our analysis.

By looking at the teachers' work in the primary and secondary school, we can examine the continuity of the whole teaching profession. Literature about teachers' lives and organizational structure mostly focuses on secondary school as the object of investigation. This research will bring about some experiences held by teachers from different levels of schooling. Though the formal structure of the primary school may be different from that of a secondary school, the teachers are working in one highly legitimated institution—the education system. Having the interviews with both secondary and primary school teachers, we may observe some similarities and differences of the teaching practices and beliefs embedded in the profession.

3.2.2 Questionnaire Survey

To supplement and offer a more general view of the teaching reality and teachers' work lives, a questionnaire survey was also conducted (see Appendix II for the questionnaire). It is a semi-structured and self-administrative questionnaire which contains three parts. A total of 198 questionnaires were distributed to teachers with a stamped return envelope, allowing the informant to post back the completed questionnaires to the researcher directly. No questionnaires were collected immediately after the distribution in order to minimize the influence of the situation. They were distributed in February and March 2003.

The questionnaires were distributed to teachers by four ways. 113 of them were distributed to two groups of in-service teachers who were studying the courses in the tertiary institutions. 60 of them were distributed to teachers working in a secondary school through the help of the school principals. And 25 of them were distributed to a group of teachers who were participating in a workshop for secondary school teachers. 77 questionnaires had been received. The response rate is 39%. Since this research is to examine the teaching work lives of teachers, it does not require applying causal model for data analysis. Therefore, no statistical analysis or inferential analysis is conducted. The statistics provided are for depicting some actualities of teachers' work for further research.

Two open questions are set in the last part of the questionnaire to allow teachers expressing their own views freely. The answers obtained are studied by analyzing and interpreting the content of these open questions. Again, answers of these questions will offer a more coherent view of the inside sentiment of teachers. The two written questions are: first, what they think as the biggest difficulty in their

work; and second, if they are satisfied the rewards and social status as a teacher. Among the completed questionnaires received, a total of 57 (73%) of the informants had given their points of view of the two open-ended questions. The surveyed teachers were asked to express their view freely. As the names of the informants were kept highly confidential and the completed questionnaires were posted back to the researcher directly, the answers are believed to be their true views towards the educational issues. It is important to realize the actual perceptions of the teachers of their work.

Each method has its distinguishing strengths and weaknesses. Yet, by employing the two methodological approaches, this research attempts to offer a coherent picture and comprehensive analysis of teachers' daily working lives. In the next chapter, I will focus on the formal teaching work of teachers in three dimensions: the ritual classifications incorporated, the characteristics of their teaching actions, and finally, the factors that shape their interests in the teaching work.

CHAPTER 4

Incorporation of Institutional Elements into Formal Teaching

Teaching practices are commonly believed as organized in a way to promote effectiveness of both teaching and learning (Meyer, Scott and Deal 1981, 1992). Teachers employ the most effective method in classroom teaching, which is believed to influence directly the technical performance of school. However, how valid is this linkage in reality, especially from the views held by the teachers who are the direct agents of knowledge transmission? How do teachers in Hong Kong organize their teaching activities? As they are working in a highly complex and uncertain context, how are their teaching beliefs shaped which in turn affect their teaching behaviors?

In the following, I am going to look at their daily work in two dimensions, namely, formal teaching and non-teaching aspects of work. These two aspects make up the routine work of a teacher in reality. In the formal teaching work, it is argued by neo-institutionalism that teachers' instructional practices are shaped by the wider institutional environment through the incorporation of the ritual classifications. The ritual classifications are highly standardized educational categories or elements which are collectively shared by not only the professions but also the wider public. Following this argument, the teaching practices may not be necessarily derived from, or led to teaching effectiveness. That means the process of formal teaching as the core function may not directly be coherent to the organizational objectives.

4.1 Time Allocation on Formal Teaching

Formal teaching, or classroom teaching, is the main core function of school organization. It is also the normatively expected work contents of teachers. Generally, it refers to the lessons taking place in a space called “school”, a room called “classroom”, with about 30 or more students, according to a formal time table set by the school level. It is commonly agreed that the work of a teacher is “instruction”. The instructional activity of teachers refers to the process of transmission of formal curriculum to the students in class. First of all, it is important to realize the allocation of time of teachers’ work as it can help us to understand the routine work of a teacher substantially and vividly. The time Hong Kong teachers spend on instructional work was surveyed in the questionnaire and it is shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 The Allocation of Time Hong Kong Teachers Spend on Instructional Work (%)

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
(1) Lesson preparation	32.0	49.3	17.3	1.3
(2) Teaching	77.3	21.3	1.3	0.0
(3) Marking students' exercise	57.3	29.3	13.3	0.0

Not surprisingly, the formal teaching work comprises a large proportion of time of teacher’s daily work. In the survey, 98.7% of the informants responded “always” or “usually” on teaching as taking most of their working hours, almost 80% of which regarded it as “always” (Table 4.1). That means most of the informants spent a lot of time on formal teaching on their work. The large proportion of time devoted to teaching remarks the highest importance of this part in the organization, as teaching is the central function of any educational organizations. Besides, from the result collected in the survey, more than 80% of the informants reveal that they “always” or “usually” spent time on other teaching tasks including marking student’s

work, and carrying out lesson preparation (Table 4.1). Formal teaching work occupies a large proportion of time of teachers every day as this is their expertise work.

The bulk of time devoted on teaching shows that the formal structure and the teachers put greatest attention to the technical core function of school organization. Every school day, teachers spend most time in the instructional activities or in formal teaching. Scott (1998) asserts that “to focus on the technology of an organization is to view the organization as a place where some type of work is done, as a location where energy is applied to the transformation of materials, as a mechanism for transforming inputs into outputs” (1998: 21). In fact, teaching is commonly understood as the technology of the school organization. Teachers and the formal structure put a large proportion of time on formal teaching. How do teachers organize their instructional practices? Are there any forces shaping their instructional practices? If any, what are the forces? Are their teaching practices shaped by organizational or school factors, as claimed by many organizational or educational theories?

4.2 Autonomy on Instructional Activities

Known to spend much time on teaching work, teachers have extensive decision-making power in teaching related matters. Nearly all teachers (97.4%) believe that they have absolute freedom to pedagogy matters (Table 4.2). 80% of them express they have “absolute freedom” to decide on teaching materials.

Table 4.2 The Extent of Autonomy on Teaching (%)

	Very free	Free	Neutral	Constrained	Very constrained
(1) Teaching method	53.9	43.4	2.6	0.0	0.0
(2) Amount of student assignment	13.2	44.7	26.3	10.5	5.3
(3) Teaching materials e.g. textbooks, worksheets	30.3	50.0	14.5	5.3	0.0

Most of the interviewees, when asked about their teaching method adopted in classroom, expressed that they have freedom of teaching with minimal organizational influence. The unique teaching style in the class implies that teachers could establish their ways of teaching with little influence from the others. In the conversations with them, the words “my way to do this” and “I myself will do it in that way” were prominent. It shows that they insist on their own ways of teaching which has a little to do with others. Mr. Leung, a teacher of multi-subjects in the primary school, said,

“I do not very much engage in teaching. Basically, my form of teaching is not traditional. Traditional teaching method mostly and largely discourages the participation of students. Mine is to encourage students’ participation. ...[What do you think about the freedom you have in teaching?] It is quite flexible. The degree of freedom is large. Though we will have discussions before some topics, generally we can teach in our own ways.”

Another secondary school teacher, Mr. Cheng, also claims that he has his own teaching method, differed from that of others:

“In the first few years, what I did was to examine the possibilities. Now, having been a teacher for many years, I can take control over the progress and the class. My style is to lead the whole class and control the initiative. ”

The teachers claimed that they are free to choose their teaching methods. Some organizational theories claim that teaching methods are controlled tightly in the organizational level (for instance, Barr and Dreeben 1986). Some of the teachers even told me that they do not follow or use the textbook in classroom. Miss Wong who teaches in a primary school said:

“I myself seldom follow the textbooks because, you know, if you do it, they will know the answer of your questions quickly. That’s why I prefer not to use the book. I’d rather teach them in my own way and then make some examples for them to deal with afterwards. At the beginning I come up with some questions by myself and then teach my students the methods or the skills to solve them. [And I will] do it for a few times on the board to make sure that they understand it. Then I will do it orally with them again. If there is time left, I will make some questions immediately on the board and ask the students to come out and do it. [What do you think is the advantage of not following the textbook?] If I follow the textbook to teach, the students can read the answers on the book and speak out in the class immediately. They are not learning anything in that way. On the contrary, if we come up with the questions and solve them together in the class, they can think together and tell me after they calculate the answers by themselves.”

It is evident that the curriculum sets the condition of teaching in classroom. However, it oftentimes has nothing to do with the way of teaching. The collected data shows that teachers think that they have freedom on the teaching method and on deciding the teaching materials used in the lesson. In the interviews, the respondents took special note of the “freedom” they enjoy in classroom. The afore-mentioned Mr. Leung and his colleagues compromised on the number of topics and contents to be taught in the academic year. They would discuss about which chapters could be skipped or lengthened, and what can be given more time and emphasis. However, there is still little control on the way they teach. School organizational theories

suggest that curriculum is a means of control to teaching in classroom. In the interviews, some teachers claim that they have to teach according to the formal curriculum, especially for the teachers teaching higher forms as they must tightly follow the syllabus set by the official educational system. Nevertheless, the exact way they teach remains unattended. How do they teach under the same curriculum? Do they teach the same materials by using the same method? Or can it be possible that they teach in different ways? The notion of “freedom” seems to be the core concern of almost all teachers. This implies teaching autonomy inside classroom is much institutionalized in the culture of teaching.

It is not new to discover that teachers place high importance on their own experiences in the discourse (Hargreaves 1984; Lortie 1975; Jackson 1968). Their way of teaching is not supervised by other parties usually. And they claim that it is difficult to actualize the teaching theories learnt in their pre-job professional training programs. Then they rely on their practices and establish their own personal theory on teaching. We can find easily in the interviews that the respondents are confident in their own way of teaching and they are willing to modify it with their experiences accumulating. We may expect to establish different teaching method or to use a variety of characteristics to categorize the students and construct their own personal expertise in teaching.

4.3 Incorporation of Ritual Classifications into Formal Teaching

In the data collected, there are some categories or classifications shared among the interviewees and the informants of the questionnaire survey. The most prevalent classifications in the interviews are student classifications.

4.3.1 Student Classifications

While Meyer and Rowan claim that “students are sharply distinguished by level or grade, programs or units completed, by subject area specialization, and even by special abilities” (1992: 77), Heyns (1986) also finds that many studies have pointed out that classrooms are always stratified for instructional purposes by ability grouping (Heyns 1986: 317; for example, see Eder 1981; Findley and Bryan 1970; Goldberg, Passow and Justman 1966; Haller and Davis 1981; Kulik and Kulik 1982; Rist 1973; Simpson 1981). The student classifications are much mentioned in teachers’ talks. They are the key variable affecting the teaching perceptions and daily practices.

4.3.1.1 Grade Level

Grade level is a prevalent characteristic which teachers use to define students’ ability and their expectations on them accordingly. In the interviews, most of them express that they will use different teaching methods in different grade levels. Generally, Miss Chan, who had been a primary school teacher for 3 years and then secondary school teacher for 7 years, denoted that there was a big gap of abilities between secondary and primary school students. When asked the reason why she changed the level of school for her profession, she said :

“There is a big difference between the primary and the secondary pupils. Pupils in secondary school are older. The teaching method is quite different. In the primary school, pupils always raise up their hands during lessons. I have to lead them to the playground. Very tedious matters [I have to handle] such as collecting the school notice. Though in secondary school I [don’t??] have to do the same tedious things, the students there are older. I can concentrate on my teaching in class. ... And I can let them do some of the things themselves which I cannot delegate in the primary school. In the secondary school, what I

need to do I just tell them what to do and let them finish it. The biggest difference is that I can concentrate more on my teaching work in secondary school.”

Miss Chan’s experience and perception suggest that she has different views on the abilities of the pupils in secondary school and primary school. These classifications are key factors affecting the ideas of teaching method they use in class. She had perceptions on “what secondary or primary school students are like and how they behave”. Her perception was pertinent to the formal classifications of the educational system. Secondary students’ abilities are higher than that of primary students just because they are “secondary school students”. It implies that teachers believe that anyone falling into the classifications of “secondary” or “primary” school student ought to have equipped those particular levels of abilities and intelligence without questioning the actual effectiveness and the consistency of the formal assessment mechanisms. The rules governing students’ entrance and promotion between grades and forms are much taken for granted. The institutional influence of these classifications is more significant than the actual difference of abilities between the students in these two types of schools.

Besides the types of school which distinguish secondary school students from primary school students, different grade levels in a school also shape the perceptions and practices of teaching. Miss Chan claims:

“In the lower form classes, we would watch TV or do some interviews as exercises as students like to do that. And I’ll let them read the passages aloud in class; they would like to do this. Higher-formers would be reluctant to do it and read like a murmur. The higher the form they are in, the more difficult it is to ask them to read passages in class. I will take charge of the lecture more likely. I speak and they listen most of the time”

4.3.1.2 “Good” and “Bad” Class

Apart from the grade levels being the main indicators to classify students in the formal structure, the classification of “good” and “bad” class, what Meyer and Rowan named as “special ability”, is another significant dimension on which teachers rely. In Hong Kong, students are required to sit for some tests for the allocation of class. Students are distributed into different classes according to their academic performance in the tests. The tests are common for “pre-students” of schools, namely F.1 and P.1 students. Sometimes, the allocation of class depends on the result in the internal examinations. Students distributed in different classes signify that they are different in the level of abilities. The academic requirement is regarded as the only indicator of the students’ performances. However, in the interviews, I found that the behavioral credit is added to the class with better performance, namely the “good” class.

Dividing the classes into high achievers’ and lower achievers’ classes, teachers will utilize different teaching methods accordingly. Miss Lee and Miss Chan, both English teacher for secondary school, claim that there is a difference between “good” and “bad” class. They will use different teaching methods correspondingly:

“[Do you adopt different teaching methods in different classes?] Yes, when teaching bad class, it is not possible to speak too much, rather we play more. ... Sometimes you want to teach more in a lesson. But once you find that they can’t catch up, you have to slow down...especially for the bad class such as the F.5 class this year, I would even go much slower, much slower than scheduled” (Miss Chan)

Mentioning the influence of the implementation of the medium of instruction, the classification of “good” and “bad” classes appear again:

“After the implementation of CMI¹⁰ [Chinese as Medium of Instruction], except English lesson, all lessons are required to use Chinese as the medium of instruction in the lower forms. However, last year in F.4, the principal want the Science stream to switch back to English [as the medium of instruction]. Class A is a good class. It is OK for them, and they are capable of handling it. But class B is a bad class—the class I teach this year. There is a big problem.” (Miss Chan)

Miss Lee had the similar experience:

“[Do you adopt different teaching methods in different classes?] Yes, the expectations are different too. ... There is a F.2 class, which is a good class; students are the more willing to pay attention to the lesson. ... In this class, made up of good pupils, I will ignore the relatively poorer students. I’d rather teach as much and as best as I can. I prefer asking those who fall behind or cannot catch up with the lesson progress to see me after school. For those who have poorer performance, they do not understand in class. But if it is a bad class, such as F.3 this year in which the whole class poorly performed, they are relatively lazier and have more difficulties to concentrate. I will tell them that they are already F.3, reminding them to work harder. On the other hand, my teaching method will be more relaxing and casual. There are three consecutive lessons in one of the teaching days and is impossible to conduct lessons in all three lessons. I would do some changes such as playing a video show, doing some online exercises. Make a change in every session and do different things in three sessions. It is more appropriate as they can’t concentrate for such a long time. In contrast, for the outstanding class in F.1, you can do some boring things for two whole lessons with them. They will also feel OK. Of course they want to play though. They are smart and they also agree that they should have to do that kind of class work. Different teaching methods are used in these three different classes.” (Miss Lee)

¹⁰ “CMI” stands for the “Chinese as the Medium of Instruction”. Since the year of 2000, the policy of medium of instruction is implemented in the secondary schools. Except 140 secondary schools gaining exemptions, all secondary schools (government and subsidized schools) in Hong Kong are required to use Chinese, instead of English as the medium of instruction. This policy aims at solving the deterioration of average English standard among Hong Kong students.

Though Miss Lee remarks in the last sentences that she uses three different teaching methods in three classes, she mainly distinguishes students and classes into “good” or “bad” classes. It is common for the teachers to categorize their students into “good” or “bad”. This classification of the classes is closely related to the formal selection and allocation system in a school which in turn is a common differentiating strategy chartered by the public in order to maintain the “educational” and “educable” function of the school.

In Hong Kong, it is common for the school to allocate students into different classes according to their academic performances determined in standardized and centralized examinations in school. Once being assigned to a “good” class, teachers will have the corresponding perceptions of the students’ intelligent abilities, as well as their moral conduct and the behavioral performance in class. For example, in the case of Miss Lee’s classes, if students study in a “good” class, it means that they can be more concentrated during lesson and they conform more to what she told them to do. These are qualities which are not assessed in any formal examinations but appears in teachers’ talks. I do not intend to rule out the possibilities of the actual difference of students in learning abilities and attitudes between “good” or “bad” class. Yet, it seems that all participants including teachers tend to prepare themselves psychologically to a certain extent what they might be expecting in this differentiation of classes even before they conduct acting teaching and learning activities inside classroom.

Moreover, in Miss Lee’s conversation, it also shows that not only she the teacher knows the meaning behind the classes, but also the students in those classes

shared this understanding. Though there is little evidence that these classifications affect students' behaviors, the F.1 outstanding class's case shows that they may act and behave according to the labeling of these "good" and "bad" classifications. The ritual classifications are not only shared by the teachers as one of the determinant factors of the way to teach, it is also scripted in the institutional environment and shared by wider society.

Some organizational theories suggest that students' characteristics affect the teaching behaviors of teachers (for example, the production function model suggested by Coleman and his colleagues 1966). It is true in some cases, probably. But in many cases the student characteristics are just some symbolic attributes held by the teachers rather than an evidence of students' actual performance in reality. Their perceptions and expectations of the ability of students are ingrained in their minds before they encounter the actual class. They have already built up their understanding and characteristics of the students of different grades without taking the actual ability of that particular group of students into account. It is more implicit in the interviews with the secondary school teachers. Generally, they classify the students into lower forms and higher forms with reference to the expectations of abilities of them. It seems that the perception of the ability of the students and the corresponding teaching method are partly established before the teachers enter the classroom or get a glimpse on the true cognitive ability of all the students in the class. The perception then functions not only for technical need but also has its institutional effects which generate real consequences.

This classification of grade levels as well as the "good" and "bad" classes, and the adhered perceptions and expectations of the students' functions—all are well

incorporated by teachers into their daily work. Those ritual classifications are embedded in the larger institutional environment commonly shared by not only the teachers, but also any actors in the education system, and even the public. We all agree on the point that students in different grade levels should have some particular level of knowledge and ability, an idea socially constructed which sustains classifications. Teachers organize their work according to these ritual classifications. While educational psychologists and curriculum developers or professionals might argue strongly for the aspect of personal development of intelligence and therefore, some sophisticated theories of educational psychology are integral, it is the social aspect of teaching and learning that might provide a better understanding of the dynamics of learning and teaching effect.

The way teachers teach does not always depend on the rational thinking and decision making in every action. Rather, they organize their teaching practices by some routine and taken-for-granted ritual classifications without consciously concerning about the actual characteristics of the students in class. Teachers have a perception of the class *before* knowing the actual abilities of the students in that class. Often they project the similar teaching methods to the good and bad classes respectively in the future. It is a “practical theory” that seems very useful in real teaching environment. Although only academic performance is measured in the formal structure, the moral and behavioral aspects of the students have been already associated with the labeling of the class. It suggest that the role of practical reason of teachers may be more prevalent than what we expect which may sometimes override the role of cognitive and calculative nature of social actions.

It also shows that the labeling of “good” and “bad” class is a socially

agreed artifact shared among teacher profession which in turn influences the teaching methods of teachers in a class. Teachers have a package of descriptions on the characteristics of students' abilities and the corresponding expectations to them are different. Surprisingly, the definition of "good" and "bad" class or grade levels to a considerable extent depends on the formal mechanism of assessments to classify the students into different classes. The perceptions of the students and the corresponding teaching methods may have started building up with less reference of the actual differences or characteristics of students in different classes than we expect. They just think that "bad" class students should have low concentration and are less intelligent while the "good" class is smarter who allow the teacher to teach more and faster. It is even suspected that the actual teaching activities are more likely organized around these ritual classifications rather than the actual needs which are beyond individual teacher's discretion. Teachers may take the modes of teaching in the good or bad classes for granted as a normal daily practice.

4.3.2 Topic Classifications

There is a defined scope and contents of topic and subjects which students have to learn to according to their levels. Some of subjects are universal to every student such as Chinese, English and Mathematics. The students have to learn the specific curriculum in their schooling process. The content knowledge is tightly defined and designed and controlled by the educational board. Teachers have to follow the curriculum in their daily work. Their teaching practices are constrained by this definition of legitimated knowledge and it is taken for granted that particular group of students have to acquire certain level and degree of knowledge in the subject. All members in society seldom question if the students are capable of learning such defined subjects or knowledge.

4.3.2.1 Different Subjects, Different Methods

Miss Wong, when telling me the teaching methods in different classes, said that she would use different methods when teaching Chinese and Mathematics respectively:

“Yes, they are different. Chinese teaching allows using various teaching methods. Lower grades have two main themes: vocabulary explanation, and sentences pattern. Vocabulary explanation alone can allow you to use a wide variety of ways to do it. Sentences pattern also can be learnt through activities, like in vocabulary explanation. ... Mathematics is different from this. If it is just calculation you can let them to do it. The most troublesome is to teach topics like figures. You need to explain to them. Oftentimes you have to tell them the characteristics of the figures. ... You enjoy more flexibility in teaching Mathematics for there are contextual passages for you to follow in Chinese teaching.”

As shown above, Miss Wong followed the defined curriculum of both Chinese and Mathematics tightly. She would not question the effectiveness of the curriculum. Besides, Mr. Leung also reveals that he applies different teaching methods in different subjects:

“It [teaching General Studies (常識科)] is more flexible. The most important thing of this subject is the content knowledge. Or else, using any teaching methods can't motivate the interests of the students. Content knowledge is very important. The subject of General Studies equals to the Biology, Chemistry and Physics in secondary school. ... It is a special subject compared to Chinese, English and Mathematics.”

He further describes the boundary of different subjects by distinguishing their different language system:

“I taught English in the past. We are not limited to teach particular subjects in primary school. But it is better in General Studies teaching. Mathematics is simple enough. But every subject has its own language. Mathematics has its own language. It has some terms. Sometimes when the pupils do not understand some mathematics, you just have to clear the language in Mathematics, then, they will understand it.”

Mr. Leung and Miss Wong’s teaching practices closely rely on the perceptions of the subjects they teach. Each subject is well-defined in the formal structure as the legitimated knowledge of the students. Clearly, teachers will use different strategies in teaching different subjects. Moreover, the curriculum covered is tightly controlled in the formal structure as they have to compromise the area and topics being taught in formal meeting. This decision will also affect the formal assessment of the students at the end of each term.

On the other hand, however, the process or the ways they teach remain unexplored. No one will ask whether he or she teaches effectively and properly in the same subject. For example, Mr. Leung claims that he has a high degree of freedom in this teaching after obtaining consensus among his colleagues on the topics. He has his own ideas or perceptions or prescriptions on the characteristics of the subjects. It seems that he can gain legitimacy of good teaching only by demonstrating plausibly that he adopts different pedagogies according to the scripted features of different subjects. By doing so, on the one hand, he can maintain autonomy as what he believes in classroom teaching. On the other hand, it is surprising that we, as members of the public do not doubt but believe he is actually doing his job well. Why is that the case? That is the function of the logic of confidence.

4.3.2.2 Institutionalized “Knowledge”

Some of the interviewees though found it difficult to teach particular subjects or topics; they do not attribute it to the problems caused by the curriculum but to personal deficiency. Miss Liu thinks that there is a large qualitative gap between the English curriculum of F.3 and that of F.4. When she discovers that it is hard for the students to adapt to the great leap of curriculum focus, she never considers it has anything to do with the formal curriculum. What she could do is to make some coping strategies to help the students adapt to the formal curriculum:

“There is a big gap between the English in F.3 and F.4. For instance, F.3 G.E. (General English) includes passive voice, preposition etc. But F.4 English are definitely not like this. It is an integration of all papers (of the HKCEE). It turns out that a student may be very hard-working in F.3 but once entering F.4, s/he may find it totally different. He found that he couldn’t catch up the curriculum. There isn’t any part called passive voice or preposition any more. Students have to work hard to adapt to this change, especially for those less brilliant who cope with facts through rote learning. In this situation, I will revise grammar in F.4 classes at the beginning of the term. You have to move on to the HKCEE curriculum at the same time, teaching them the way to answer the questions which is totally different from that of F.3. You have to teach them step by step, paper by paper... Do more consolidation exercises.”

As shown above, she never denies or discredits the topic classifications in the formal structure. She would never claim that it is a “fallacious curriculum” as the curriculum is highly legitimated.

4.3.2.3 “Differentiation” of School Knowledge

Furthermore, there is a clear differentiation and boundary of the subjects to be taught. Miss Chan reveals a clear boundary between the Biology and English

curriculum. Talking about the “bad” class, she claims:

“Pupils learnt Biology using CMI from F.1 to F.3. Now, when they are in F.4, they have to use English. They have already been poor in English. They have to understand the meaning of sentences and the pronunciations of the English terms. They spend a lot of time doing so. Something which does not belong to the area of science subjects such as vocabulary dictation, especially in the early transition from F.3 to F.4, takes up the teacher lots of time doing it.”

She has, in her mind, some “basic” knowledge which students ought to have learnt in certain grade levels:

“The situation is even getting worse after the implementation of the CMI or EMI¹¹. It is because as they are promoted to F.3, they still don’t know many vocabularies such as “demand and supply”. It is a very basic term in EPA [Economics and Public Affairs].”

In the cases of Miss Chan and Miss Leung, a clear boundary and classification of subjects and clear contents to be taught are formalized and institutionalized as the legitimated “knowledge” that students should have learnt in particular grade levels. Their teaching behaviors are shaped and framed by the defined “knowledge”. On the other hand, the curriculum is tightly controlled in the organizational level. Teachers are not allowed to amend and design alternative curriculum by themselves. Besides, the daily activities are loosely controlled. No one will ask specifically the actual difference between different classes.

4.3.2.4 “Subject Stratification”

¹¹ “EMI” stands for “English as the Medium of Instruction”. Schools are allowed to choose the medium of instruction from F.4 to F.7, for the grade levels which are excluded in the 9-year free and compulsory education in secondary school.

Furthermore, the topic classifications have further institutional meanings which are collectively defined and shared by society. Different subjects are chartered differently to form a stratification of school subjects. For instance, the language subjects like English and Chinese, and Mathematics receive more attention, more resources and more time and energy in the school system. In contrast, subjects like Economics and Publics Affairs in secondary school and General Studies in primary school are given much less limelight in the educational system and local society. The stratification is not only shared among the teaching profession or within the organization, but also reinforced and upheld in locally and world-widely. Meyer et. al. finds that the national curriculum of countries all over the world are homogenous (Meyer et. al. 1995). The time and energy allocations of different subjects are similar in the world. Meyer (1995) claims that there exists a “world culture” which is formal structure of the educational systems, and its existence depends largely on the consolidation of mass society. Thus, the stratification of the subjects are more likely responding to the institutional of “legitimate knowledge” rather than responding to the local needs.

In the interviews, teachers also show this difference in status among subjects. The most prevalent highly legitimate subject is English. Miss Chan reveals the importance and high legitimacy of English subjects. As I mentioned above, the principal of her school requires students of science stream to have lessons in English. It suggests the principal’s belief in a plausible difference between learning in English and in Chinese. Some local scholars claim that English is a product of colonial governance in Hong Kong before the handover of sovereignty in 1997 (Morris 1997). This Marxist view is downplayed by the empirical studies of some institutional theorists showing a high homogeneity of curriculum over the world (Meyer et. al.

1995).

English learning is not only responding to the local needs but also to demonstrate an isomorphic structure of a “modern” educational system. Schools put a considerable proportion of resources, time, energy and emphasis on English learning. The entry of English teachers (teachers teaching English) is strictly controlled in the organizational level. Particularly, the training and the qualifications of the English teachers are tightly monitored by the educational administrators and the general public. For instance, in order to improve the average English standard of students, English teachers are required to take up Language Proficiency Test¹² in order to teach English in public schools. Moreover, the introduction of the scheme of Native English Teacher (NET)¹³ shows that more resources are spent on English. It implies that English receives a higher “prestige” in society compared with the other subjects. However, it is not certain if an upgrading English standard would improve the performance of the organization technically. The rationale behind this decision is institutional rather than organizational. Teachers also take it for granted that teaching in English can receive more reputation, as well as more challenges from the external society.

4.3.3 School Classifications

Besides student classifications and topic classifications, school classifications are also a key factor shaping the teaching practices and beliefs of

¹² Since 2001, teachers in primary schools and secondary schools are required to pass the Language Proficiency Test for Teachers (LPTA) as a proof of their professional knowledge in teaching. Teachers who disqualify in the Test are not allowed teach in the public schools.

¹³ The scheme of Native English Teacher (NET) was introduced in 2000. School can apply Quality Education Funding to employ native English speakers in school to teach English.

teachers. For the secondary school teachers, the banding¹⁴ and the medium of instruction of the school have become two main indicators outlining the characteristics and status of the school and shape their teaching beliefs and practices. Miss Liu mentions these two elements to explain the student's characteristics and the corresponding expectations she has in a class:

“I was very happy [for teaching the good class], especially the first term when we watched Harry Potter together to learn the vocabularies. I asked them to type the new words in [Microsoft] Word, or write them down on the exercise book. The banding of our school is not that high because we are Chinese school. I feel really happy that they can learn some new vocabularies through these activities.”

Whether the policy of medium of instruction will result in a promotion of performance of a school remains questionable. In some cases, it exerts negative impacts to the student learning. In the interviews, Miss Chan tells us that this incorporation of the institutional elements does not necessarily lead to increasing the organizational effectiveness. Only if it is homogenous in the form or outlook of the institutional environment, that is to use EMI in this case, can the school gain legitimacy from the public. Teaching as the main organizational behavior definitely has to have these institutionalized elements integrated which in turn greatly constrains the teaching practices.

It shows that expectations will be aligned with the banding and the medium of instruction of the school. It is not a rational or calculative action. Rather, the

¹⁴ Secondary schools are classified and evenly distributed into three bandings according to their students' performance in the open examinations and the overall performance of the intake students. Band 1 school is the best category of all, representing that the students of that school perform better on average compared with the schools in other bandings.

characteristics or the contents behind the ritual classifications embedded in the institutional environments are pre-scripted early before the teachers enter the education system. That means they already have an understanding on “a low banding school” or “a school using CMI” even they are not working in the education system. Similarly, they “know” how a “high banding school” or “a school using EMI” looks like and this collective definition or interpretation of the ritual classifications becomes a factor shaping the teaching practices and beliefs which are not rationally noticed by teachers.

4.3.4 Teacher Classifications

Teacher classifications are also prevailing in teachers’ talks. What types of teachers teach what subjects; and which teacher is qualified to teach which particular grade levels and subjects—are highly standardized and tightly controlled in the organizational level. Miss Liu, who is studying a degree in Education claims that it makes a difference after she has attained the degree qualification:

“Why do I study the degree program? I would be driven out otherwise. It is risky if you don’t get a degree. It has been long before I really considered taking it as I thought it would be boring to study Education. ...After studying this course, my goal is to teach F.4. ... Perhaps it is not the next year I am assigned to teach the upper form. But after attaining the degree, the principal will think that I can manage to teach F.4, though it will be a bit tougher.”

It shows that an Education degree holder is considered more able to teach higher forms. Not only do the teachers themselves think that they will be able to manage, but also the principal believes that the teacher can handle the work just because of the degree recognition. It is even shared by wider society that it is only formally legitimated to teach higher forms if they attain a degree in Education or the

equivalent major fields; otherwise, they are not allowed or admitted to be able to teach the higher forms. Another primary school teacher, Miss Lee, who is studying Putonghua courses after work, also claims that she will not be qualified until she has attained the certificate after taking this course:

“[You mentioned that you are studying a Putonghua course after school. What is it about?] It is a course to prove your standard in Putonghua. I’ll get a certificate when accomplish it. [What will be the difference before and after getting the certificate?] As I mentioned before, I was teaching in a secondary school. At that time I had no certifications in Putonghua. Though I speak well, people still think that you do have to have professional training. That’s why I study the teacher course in Baptist University to get a certificate to teach Putonghua.”

The empirical enactment of those qualifications or professional qualifications is seldom tested. There is little evidence to prove the improvement in work performance of a teacher with his/her obtaining a degree or certificate. Both teachers claim that their knowledge on those particular subjects has been improved. The point is: how valid it is to assume that their teaching performances will improve once they have attained certain qualifications or certificates? Moreover, like Mr. Cheng’s case, a graduate in Economics and Accountancy, he is definitely qualified to teach Economics and Accountancy in the secondary school. The crux of those cases is: only by assembling the symbolic credentials properly can teachers or the education system gain legitimacy of a typical and chartered organization from the public. Teaching practices and beliefs are affected by the ritual classifications of teachers.

The ritual classifications are embedded in the institutional environment of the school organization. They are institutionalized and incorporated into the teaching

belief system and then shape the instructional practices of teachers. In order to gain legitimacy, institutional rules are institutionalized as rational myths as the constraints of teaching. Some rational myths embedded in the institutional environments are incorporated into the day-to-day work of teachers. These rational myths, in Meyer and Rowan's words, are "the rule-like means to attain some collectively defined goals". People seldom question why but just adopt the method as "out-there" products and believing that it can right way help them attain the educational objectives. There are some "ritual classifications" which teachers incorporate into their way of teaching.

Ritual classifications are tightly controlled in the educational organization. In the conversations with teachers, the classifications of students always appear to be the essential elements affecting their teaching decisions. These classifications, as claimed by Meyer and Rowan, are institutionalized and embedded in the wider institutional environment of the organizations. Besides the ritual classifications, there are some taken-for-granted notions of practices which are also shaping the teaching behaviors of teachers. I have chosen the two most prominent aspects in the teachers' workplace in the interviews to further examine how the institutional environment further shapes the organizational behaviors of teachers.

4.4 Teaching as Practices

As I mentioned above, teachers claim a high degree of autonomy in pedagogical matters. Owing to the great freedom enjoyed in teaching, it can be derived that there must be a wide variety of teaching methods used in classroom. Besides, their teaching methods are commonly expected to lead to teaching effectiveness. Nevertheless, we see a quite different and interesting picture in the

survey.

From the distribution of “the teaching methods teachers use most frequently” (Table 4.3), we can see that “lecture” is the relatively common teaching method the informants employ in real teaching. It makes up 50% of the total and thus become the largest number of teachers choose to use it. In other words, other teaching methods altogether comprise the other half of the distribution. It shows that lecture as the traditional teaching method still is the most popular and commonly used in classroom though teachers claim that they are free on pedagogical matters. It might be due to the fact that it is actually the most effective teaching method in teaches’ views if also taking into account some constraining forces inside classroom that teachers have to encounter.

Table 4.3 The Teaching Methods Teachers Use Most Frequently

Teaching method	Frequency	Percentage (%)
(1) Question and answer	19	24.4
(2) Group discussion	6	7.7
(3) Free talk	1	1.3
(4) Activity	11	14.1
(5) Lecture	39	50.0
(6) Individual tutorial	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

It is commonly believed that the homogeneity of the teaching method is caused by the consensus directed to teaching effectiveness. The force that shapes the teaching norms is easily resulted from the promotion of student learning. As it is shown in the survey, the teachers do not consider “lecture” as the most effective teaching method (Table 4.4) and yet, half of the teaching method applied falls into

this category. It means that the methods commonly used and frequently used in the lessons might not be regarded as the most effective method for student learning by the teachers. It is not the intention or scope of this research to assess the various approaches and the teaching effectiveness of teaching methods. Instead, it is equally meaningful and important to understand why there is a gap between the most effective methods beheld by teachers and the actual teaching method applied despite the fact that they claim they have autonomy in pedagogical matters.

Table 4.4 The Teaching Methods Teachers Consider as the Most Effective

Teaching method	Frequency	Percentage (%)
(1) Question and answer	11	14.3
(2) Group discussion	7	9.1
(3) Free talk	1	1.3
(4) Activity	24	31.2
(5) Lecture	17	22.1
(6) Individual tutorial	16	20.8
(7) Others	1	1.3
Total	77	100.0

What they consider as “the most effective pedagogy” differs from each other though half of them are adopting “lecture” as their most frequently used method. Only 22% of them consider “lecture” as the most effective method, and about 30% activities and 20% individual tutorial, and about 30% the remaining four options (Table 4.4). That means teachers hold different views towards the way to teach effectively.

Respondents of the questionnaire survey were asked to fill in the most and the second most effective and frequently used teaching methods respectively

(Question No. 8 and No. 9, Appendix II). The respondents have to fill in two answers in order, showing the priorities in each question. I use a 7-scale point scale to show to what extent can the teachers employ the most effective teaching methods into daily teaching, with “1” representing that they can apply the most effective teaching methods as the most frequently used methods in actuality; and “7” representing that they cannot apply the first two most teaching methods as a usual practice in daily teaching (for the operationalization of the scale, refer to Appendix III). From Table 4.5, 30% of the informants offer no matching items in the two questions. It implies that a proportion of the teachers do not frequently use the “most effective teaching methods” in real teaching. On the other words, they are using a less effective teaching method in the real teaching.

Table 4.5 Consistency between the Most Frequently Used and the Most Effective Teaching Method

Degree of consistency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	11	14.3
2	9	11.7
3	7	9.1
4	10	13.0
5	10	13.0
6	7	9.1
7	23	29.9
Total	77	100.0

It is noteworthy that teachers hold a widely dispersed views on the “most effective teaching method” but a relatively homogenous teaching method in practice. Teachers, surprisingly, do not adopt the most effective method in classroom teaching. Why is that the case? It might be the fact that in reality, teachers have to work in a highly institutionalized environment. It includes the physical environment and the

institutional setting of the educational system. The physical environment of formal teaching is highly standardized and homogenous. Besides, the schedule and teaching curriculum also set the institutional environment of teachers’ daily work which constrain teachers to apply the most teaching method in reality.

We can see from the survey that more than 90% of the informants think that the goal of a lesson is to “arouse students’ interests on the subject” and near 90% of them “let students understand the subject knowledge” (Table 4.6). It shows a large proportion of the teachers emphasize student learning and are dedicated to enhance student learning. It is consistent and coherent with the organizational goal. At least, in their claims, they are doing something that is consistent to the organizational goal.

In fact, the educational objectives of teachers are shared by the whole society, including the teacher. It seems impossible that teaching profession survives in the institution without conforming to the educational objectives. The universally held belief of what educational goals and objectives should become the central force in the external environment that deeply influences organizational patterning and behavior and in this case, the teaching practices of teachers. This may explain the functional gap between the formal structure and the actual teaching activities, and the homogeneity of the instructional activities.

Table 4.6 Teachers' Perception on the Goal of a Lesson (%)

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
(1) Attain the teaching schedule	11.7	40.3	42.9	5.2	0.0
(2) Let students understand the subject knowledge	43.6	43.6	10.3	2.6	0.0

(3) Arouse students' interests on the subject	53.8	37.2	2.6	3.8	2.6
(4) Maintain classroom order	25.6	46.2	23.1	5.1	0.0
(5) Teach knowledge besides curriculum	5.2	48.1	35.1	11.7	0.0
(6) Moral education	32.1	50	12.8	2.6	2.6
(7) Train students' independent thinking	38.5	48.7	6.4	3.8	2.6
(8) Make students pay attention to the lesson	25.6	52.6	19.2	2.6	0.0
(9) Build a good relationship with students	35.9	50	9	3.8	1.3

Teachers are facing some constraints in their work so that their teaching behaviors are shaped into similar pattern. Though teachers claim that they are free to choose the teaching methods in their real teaching environment, their teaching methods are shaped by some wider forces which may have little to do with the actual effectiveness in classroom. It may be the kind of social coercion which is shaping the teaching behaviors of teachers even when the teachers are working in an isolated classroom without external supervision and evaluation. They take the way to teach for granted as the usual way to teach students. These constraints make them unable to apply their own “effective method” in real life; but instead they allow teaching norms to shape their teaching behaviors. That’s why one teaching method is prevalent as the most frequently used method. In other words, there exists a system of teaching norms which provide meaning for attaining the collectively agreed-on goals – to promote teaching effectiveness.

These constraints are not only from the school organization where they are working. It is the intuitional environment that is affecting the pattern of teaching and

shaping the teaching norms in their daily practices. I argue that teachers are rational actors in the organization when interacting or encountering social properties existing in the environment, and that the environment at the same time is limiting their choices of action. That means they do not react to their environment passively or freely. The environment defines the way of behaving in the institution. They are not calculative or normative in actions. Their actions are rational with constraints. These constraints are institutional in nature. They adopt the “normal” way of teaching while seldom question the effectiveness of it. Or they even wonder the effectiveness of the method they often use. They are not likely and not allowed to adopt the effective teaching method instead. It is because they have to gain legitimacy by the incorporation of rational myths about the way of teaching.

The findings obtained from the survey dismiss the assumption of some the organizational theories which claim that teachers organize their work so as to contribute to technical effectiveness of the organization. They are neither utilitarian nor calculative rational actors, nor are they normative actors, as suggested by Parsons (1937). They are rather semi-passive actors who think that their actions are rational. But the rationality itself is also institutionalized in the organizational environment that penetrates teachers’ work as a scripted package. Teachers act according to some of the taken-for-granted routine or programmed scripts in their work. The teaching practices and beliefs are shaped by this institutional force. Teaching behavior is a practical action rather than a rational one. The practice discussed below, namely homework, is the most prevalent example as a taken-for-granted practice. The actual function to promote technical effectiveness remains unquestioned. They are the practices demonstrating a rule-like means to achieve the collectively defined educational goal.

4.4.1 Homework

Homework is also a ritual classification which is incorporated into the daily practices of teacher, displaying one of the homogeneous practices in school organization. As it is shown in the survey, among all the works related to teaching, the informants reported they have least freedom on the decision on homework or assignment to students. Only 60% of them claimed to have autonomy on the amount of work of students (Table 4.7). That means it is relatively controlled by the school level which is suggested by some of the organization theories. Assigning homework is controlled in the formal structure of the organization carefully. However, it is rather an institutionalized practice.

Table 4.7 The Kind of Work Teachers Feel the Most Exhausted (Instructional Work)

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
(1) Lesson preparation	6	8.1
(2) Teaching	6	8.1
(3) Marking students' exercise	20	27.0

Table 4.8 The Kind of Work Teachers Feel the Most Satisfied (Instructional Work)

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
(1) Lesson preparation	16	21.3
(2) Teaching	40	53.3
(3) Marking students' exercise	1	1.3

The amount or type of homework assigned to students daily is controlled

by the organization level for institutional purposes rather than promoting student learning. First of all, it is a form of assessment which is relatively standardized across the classes in the same grade level. Teachers usually use some collectively selected exercise books or worksheets as homework or assignments for their students. The assignments are parts of the planned teaching schedule shared among various teachers. They are the sign of teaching progress. Having covered a chapter or a part of the curriculum, teachers usually give assignments to the students. The homework or exercises are related to the contents of the lesson and signify that the teachers have finished that part of the curriculum. It is a standardized and common task among teachers which shows the progress of teaching. Little documentation proves the effectiveness and the empirical function of the homework assigned to promote student learning.

In the survey, some informants (27%) consider “marking students’ assignments” as the most exhausting work in their work place (Table 4.7). It shows that they are not very keen on this kind of work. On the other hand, some of the interviewees displayed that giving students homework or assignments is a routine work. Miss Liu’s practice shows this point:

“The students always complain the huge amount of homework, perhaps it is because they feel it difficult to do it. ... I am glad when my class does not complain about the amount of homework I gave. I indeed assign much homework for them to do. They will finally know that you are doing something good to them. They will not complain. But if one day you do not give them homework, they will be very happy. They do not make complaints in every lesson. But in those days they always complain when you assign homework to them. Perhaps they think it is not helpful to them.”

Though Miss Liu is confident that the kind and amount of homework she gives enhance student learning, it is a taken-for-granted means for teachers to attain this goal in their daily practices. Little evidence suggests the kind of homework or the amount of assignments are actually proven to be good to students; however giving homework has become a collectively agreed “effective” means to attain the educational goal. Mr. Cheng claims that it is not trustworthy to use daily assignments to measure students’ abilities,

“I usually use tests to evaluate what they have learnt in the last lesson, how much they get the point. ... There isn’t any other method. You can’t trust on the homework performance. It is possible they copy from others. Test is the best method”

In spite of it, he still assigns homework to his students as it has already been more a convention—an institutionalized practice and work of a teacher. He claims that marking students’ work consumes a lot of time and energy in his daily work:

“The number of students in a class will directly increase my work load. ... I have to mark more assignments. As I will give them some assessment exercises after lessons, the work load is accumulated as more exercises given. You have to give another one right after you finish one topic. Therefore, the amount of work on marking papers is a bit heavier.”

The amount of homework requires Mr. Cheng to spend a lot of time on marking. However, he still continues to assign homework or exercises to his students even though he was not very certain of the real function of homework and if the assignment can help reflect what students have learned in class. Homework, still, functions as an institutionalized practice for teachers to demonstrate their teaching progress rather than tools directing to learning effectiveness in teachers’ daily work.

The second sociological meaning that homework is tightly controlled in the formal structure is that the message of the teaching progress is shared by other parties including parents, principals and the other teachers. Pedagogies or teaching materials are part of the teaching activities taking part inside a closed system called classroom. They are free from external inspection and supervision. As shown above, teachers claim that they have a high level of autonomy in selecting the pedagogical approaches and teaching materials in classroom. The functions of the teaching methods and materials adopted are confined to the isolated and independent classroom.

Homework, on the other hand, can be extended to the external environment of classroom teaching. Parents will realize that the teachers have taught a particular chapter or topics in lesson and consequently, they will expect the students to have the abilities to accomplish that exercises or assignments. Principals also will evaluate the homework of the students annually, ensuring that both teachers and students are doing their work properly, without investigating the real teaching situations. The colleagues also share the meanings and the sign demonstrated through the homework assigned to students. They will use it as the indicator of teaching progress and share among themselves. Therefore, the symbolic meaning of homework is significantly influential than its actual help in student learning. Teachers are also believed to have conducted “teaching” in the classroom daily.

Homework is different from other teaching methods and materials as it is more related to the external environment outside of classroom teaching. It seems that homework functions as a symbol besides the practical assessment of students. It is

institutionalized as a daily practice of formal schooling process. It is seldom evaluated as whether or not it is an effective measure of student learning. Does homework really function as a promotion of organizational effectiveness? To what extent does homework enhance student learning? How does homework function as a tool for learning in reality? People are not likely to ask this kind of questions. They do not care much about how effective homework in reality. In the interview with Miss Wong, we can see that homework plays an important role in her teaching. However, she never questions or wonders the effectiveness of it.

Furthermore, there is a functional gap between real teaching and the assignment of homework. If teaching avoids the direct evaluation into their classroom teaching from the external environment, teachers will have a larger degree of freedom no matter in teaching method or the teaching materials they use. However, as the symbolic meaning of homework is shared by other parties which make the teaching progress become a “social reality”, teachers’ work is closely linked with this practice to show that they are catching up with the formal teaching schedule in the formal structure. Then homework becomes a practical action rather than a rational action for assessing students’ learning.

The integration of institutionalized rules is convincing enough to explain the logic of teaching and teachers’ formulation of ideological beliefs. It is because many of these institutional rules are rationalized and legitimized from the external society. The rationalization and legitimacy of teaching activities are coherent to the world-wide shared ideology of “professionalism”. It is by the incorporation of the ritual classifications and practices can teachers legitimated as “teach professionally”. Imagine what if teachers do not comply with the institutionally defined rationalized

curriculum classifications; or what if teachers teach in the public school without licensing from a chartered institution, they cannot be legitimated as “professionally functional” to the schooling process. On the contrary, once teachers gain a certificate in a tertiary institution, people believe that he is “professional” enough to teach in the school. This also explains the introduction and implementation of “graduate teachers” in recent years. If all the in-service teachers are all degree holders, it is “expected” that they can provide a more professional techniques as well as better educational prospects for the betterment of the society as a whole. Therefore, the interests of teachers in instructional work is shaped and affected by the institutional forces, particularly the “myth of professionalism” as the most distinctive force.

Nevertheless, we should not neglect the resistance and response of the teachers in the organization in the decoupled structure. We hold that teachers are not passive actors who adapt to the environment passively entirely. They have their own cognition and rational thinking especially when the practices and beliefs are not institutionalized in the formal structure. Moreover, we cannot neglect the conflict of interests they have against the organizational level. What situation they are in as their works are constrained by some institutional forces? Do they experience any tensions from work? How do they cope with the actual teaching? It is found that teachers identify some constraints on their work which make them stressful. To solve this tension teachers have their coping strategies: empirically, they shift their focus to the behavioral performance of students rather than the academic performance as the source of job satisfaction. This belief system is conflicting with the interest of the organization.

CHAPTER 5

Obstacles and Constraints in Work

In the previous chapter, I focus on the way teachers organize their instructional practices. Institutionalized ritual classifications are incorporated into the daily instructional work of teachers. However, teachers sometimes do encounter some obstacles and constraints in their work. This chapter discovers the coping strategies of teachers. Teachers identify some sources of pressure in their work place. It is surely a fact that as they survive in the decoupling system; they realize the inconsistencies and uncertainties in work. Teachers express some constraints in their workplace, which make them feel exhausted, and ineffective: the non-teaching work, the principal, the parents and local community, and the education policy. These are also ritual classifications in the educational system shaping the teaching practices and beliefs in reality.

Teachers' interests are, as I argue here, institutionally constructed. To survive, they adopt some coping strategies. The strategies are somewhat under the notion of the professionalism. Teachers strike for more autonomy but fewer constraints in their work lives. How do the coping strategies come about? And how do the coping strategies function so as to stabilize the uncertainties in teachers' workplace?

5.1 Incorporation of Ritual Classifications in Non-Instructional Work

5.1.1 Non-teaching Work

First of all, let us have an overview of the non-teaching work teachers take

up in their daily work. The time allocated on non-teaching work is far less than the time devoted on teaching work (Table 5.1). Only approximately 50% of the informants reveal that they “always” or “often” spend time on various non-teaching work such as administrative work, administrative meetings and subject meetings. From this table, the time devoted on non-teaching work seem quite similar to that of the instructional work. However, if we look at the other figures more carefully, we would notice this aspect of work exerts a considerable amount of workload on teachers and it turns out affecting their teaching performances.

Table 5.1 The Allocation of Time Teachers Spend on Non-instructional Work (%)

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
(1) Counseling or seeing students	13.3	61.3	22.7	2.7
(2) Administrative work	14.7	34.7	38.7	10.7
(3) Administrative meetings	8.1	36.5	33.8	21.6
(4) PTA ¹⁵ or seeing parents	5.3	29.3	62.7	2.7
(5) Subject meeting	16.0	45.3	37.3	1.3
(6) Other function unit	18.7	44.0	34.7	2.7
(7)Writing reports	8.1	44.6	43.2	4.1

In the survey, we can see that the amount of everyday work of a teacher is very immense. Many teachers reveal that the workload is very heavy in their work. Apart from teaching, more than 97.4% of the informants have to deal with non-teaching tasks. The non-teaching tasks include administrative work, administration meetings, subject meetings, class master teacher, school team teacher, extra-curricular activities, and other functional units. Those works are only some of the examples of non-teaching work which are not directly related to formal teaching

¹⁵ “PTA” stands for the Parent and Teachers Association, which is a sub-unit in school. The committee is composed of both teachers in the school and the parents. This functional unit aims at building a closer relationship and better cooperation between parents and teachers.

in classroom but the responsibilities of teachers. Each teacher in a school may have to take up a number of these works. In the survey, among those who take up non-teaching work in their workplace, more than 60% of the informants are taking up more than 3 items of non-teaching work in their daily work routine (Table 5.2). How do teachers organize this kind of work and what does it do to a teacher’s daily work and to the whole organization?

Table 5.2 The Number of Duties Teachers Take Up

Number of duties	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	8	10.7
2	21	28.0
3	29	38.7
4	14	18.7
5	3	4
Total	75	100.0

From the open-ended questions asked in the last part of the questionnaire, one respondent writes the following:

“Teachers have to take up an increasing amount of work besides teaching. The time for preparing lesson is thus decreasing. It directly influences the teaching quality. Teachers are solely responsible for implementing those tasks, though they are the front-line workers. They are only subordinated to orders without being given any chances to express their own opinions” (Questionnaire No. 13)

Besides the informant’s view quoted above, among the 57 questionnaires with answers written on these two questions, 30 of them expressed that the work load, especially the work unrelated to teaching, is too heavy for them. Some of them even consider the work as additional or extra- work of teachers. It implies that they do not

agree with the idea that the non-teaching is a part of work or one of the responsibilities of teachers in school. That means this aspect of work, though is an important part of teachers' daily work for it occupies a considerable amount of time and energy of teachers, is not legitimated as the obligation of teachers working in school organization.

The non-teaching work may affect the teaching work if the amount or workload of this kind of periphery work occupies a considerable amount of time and energy of individual teacher which brings undesirable impacts on real teaching. The influence, in fact, may be arbitrary. It is important to understand how teachers view and organize the "periphery" work with teaching work. We cannot jump to a conclusion without taking the teachers' view into account as their work is influenced by this to a great extent.

In the questionnaire, near 80% of the informants affirm the fact that the non-teaching work does affect the teaching quality or effectiveness (It will be discussed in the later part in this chapter). Despite that, none of the informants gains job satisfaction from this kind of work (Table 5.4). On the contrary, about 20% of them consider this work as the most exhausting work. Though most of the teachers have to handle work other than formal teaching, they reveal that they have little autonomy in this aspect of work (Table 5.4). Contrasting with teaching work in which 97.4% of the informants think that they have absolute freedom or freedom (Table 4.2, p. 59), near 50% of them reveal that they are constrained or very constrained in administrative work (Table 5.5 shown on p. 107, will discuss in detail in the later part of this chapter). We can see that they have little autonomy on this aspect of work. It may be the reason why they cannot get job satisfaction from this.

**Table 5.3 The Kind of Work Teachers Feel the Most Exhausted
(Non-instructional Work)**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
(1) Counseling or seeing students	6	8.1
(2) Administrative work	14	18.9
(3) Administrative meetings	3	4.1
(4) PTA or seeing parents	2	2.7
(5) Subject meeting	2	2.7
(6) Other function unit	4	5.4
(7) Writing reports	10	13.5
(8) Nothing	1	1.4
Total	76	100.0

**Table 5.4 The Kind of Work Teachers Feel the Most Satisfied
(Non-instruction Work)**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
(1) Counseling or seeing students	12	16.0
(2) Administrative work	0	0.0
(3) Administrative meetings	0	0.0
(4) PTA or seeing parents	0	0.0
(5) Subject meeting	0	0.0
(6) Other function unit	2	2.7
(7) Writing reports	0	0.0
(8) Nothing	4	5.3
Total	75	100.0

In the interviews, the teachers also reveal an exhausting feeling to this kind of work and think that it occupies a great amount of time with low effectiveness and intrinsic rewards. Mr. Cheng, who is in charge of the discipline unit in a secondary school, comments on his work in the unit:

“The disciplinary work is relatively heavy because you sometimes have to

spend up to few lessons to deal with the sudden events. It keeps me from attending the lessons. ... [Which part of your work do you think are the most exhausted?] Disciplinary work... it is a waste of time and energy as you can't do much if parents protect their children. It would be fine if you see some good results after you work so hard. But you can't do anything meaningful as soon as the parents over-protect their children who did an offence. Little effects can be seen. It is even worse if the parents are blaming on you. The disciplinary work takes you a lot of time to follow up with the pupils. After a few years if you know that the pupils make no difference or improvement, you'll be really upset about it."

Respondents of the questionnaires also reveal that the effort put on the non-teaching work is ineffective and is a waste of time and energy. One of the respondents writes that:

"The work load is too heavy. Teachers though are willing but not capable of doing well. [It] lacks room for teachers to do self-alignment. Every step of development (on pedagogy or on administration) and the educational policy may not be beneficial to the students as a result. The huge efforts we make are absolutely not praiseworthy to the public." (Questionnaire No. 22)

However, not all teachers view their non-teaching work negatively. Some of the interviewees are very devoted to their administrative or other functional unit's work. In the interviews, we can see that some of them give positive meaning to this kind of work and think that it is good to the survival and legitimacy of the school. Some current organizational theories suggest that it is due to organizational and hierarchical structure of the school organization that make teachers conform with this informal or undefined responsibilities and works (for instance, Holt 1964; Rogers 1968). However, it shows that the rationales behind performing non-teaching work are not limited to organizational influence. It also has much to do with the survival of the school organization. Miss Yau is one of the teachers keen on the work of

curriculum development of the primary school,

“Schools are involved in four projects at this moment. I am in charge of writing proposals. The one about the professional development is the easiest. The one about parent volunteers is easy too. ... The other two projects, one about integrated education, is not difficult to me. ... The last one is about curriculum development. It’s about how to develop the “theme education” (主題教學). The result of this will be very good”

Mr. Leung teaching in the same school also agrees with the positive meaning of this non-teaching work. When asked about the career goal, he affirms the function of the non-teaching work to the operation of a school:

“There is a networking system as a sharing platform for all teachers now. It is indirectly beneficial to the students. It is a necessity. For example, it is impossible if no one is in charge the resources, moral education. Homework tutorial and library are some kinds of service work. It is a multi-dimension to assist teaching work. Those functions are periphery in school but you can’t work without these. Someone will think that they are too much. But if you handle it properly, you will know that it is not a matter. If you lead properly or define the work properly, the system will run smoothly. For example, in those days just the senior teachers are in charge of holding seminars about moral education. Now, we will distribute it to the moral educational unit. In this way it runs more smoothly. You need a system but not unorganized individuals when things happened.”

Not only the teachers in the primary school, Miss Liu also thinks that the workload from the administrative work or non-teaching work not too heavy in her workplace:

“I am a member of a task force to promote the English standard of this school by holding some campaigns and activities for the whole school. ... [What do think about the amount of work of this position?] Frankly, if you will to do it, you won’t feel it is too much. If you work on regular basis and never do more

than you should, you will think it's heavy. In those days the ex-principal empowered us to decide the amount of work to take up. The teachers were free to choose to do it or not. The principal would not force the teachers to do any work of this kind. The present principal will ask all the teachers to do together. Some of my colleagues are not used and do not adapted to do such heavy workload as their work is much more than before. But it's fine with me."

Miss Liu, though not free to decide the amount and the kinds of work, views it is a part of her work. On the other hand, she also reveals that some of the teachers are not willing to take up non-teaching work. In the interviews with Mr. Leung and Miss Yau mentioned before, they point out somewhere else that some of the colleagues may not have the same thoughts with them. They may resist doing this "extra" work. For instance, Miss Yau states the biggest obstacle in her work is the lack of cooperation and appreciation of her colleagues:

"It is much more important but difficult to gain the support and cooperation of the colleagues than that of the principals. They are the biggest motivation to implement those campaigns. For instance, we encourage "outdoor learning". Some colleagues are afraid of maintaining order in the open area. They are afraid of creating hassles, so some of them are quite resistant to this. I had prepared the worksheet for the outdoor activity four weeks before, with not a single reply from them finally. ... Some of the teachers are not willing to bring the students out."

Besides Miss Yau, Mr. Au also reveals that he has to ask for help on the administrative work by the informal relationship with his colleagues:

"You can't gain any job satisfaction in administrative work as it is too complicated. You have to deal with other people. ... It's hard to handle all the work in a secondary school structure. You need to pat on their back to ask for help."

We can see from the above that some of the teachers refuse to do the non-teaching work. The views held by teachers are quite varied. Some of them such as Miss Liu, Miss Yau and Mr. Leung were well accustomed to the administrative work while some of the teachers who may not be included in the interviews, are quite resistant to this kind of work.

In fact, people seldom take non-teaching work of a teacher into account when evaluating the teaching quality. The formally defined responsibility of a teacher excludes the administrative work. The work is not directly related to teaching and is viewed as some “periphery” or “extra” work of teaching. That means the non-teaching work has not been institutionalized as daily practices or legitimated work of a teacher, at least, not as a convention in one modern script of teaching. It is ill-defined in the institutional environment. As a result, the actions in this aspect of work are relatively rational and calculative. Some of the teachers even dismiss that it should be a part of a teacher’s work. There are lack of institutionalized rules to govern the practices and beliefs of the non-teaching work. Without the ritual classifications or routine practices, the undefined work is not taken for granted as a part of teachers’ responsibilities. Therefore, teachers view this kind of work and organize it in different ways. Perhaps, it is because of the lack of a legitimate role and function in modern educational institution; as far as non-teaching work is concerned, it allows more room for variations and an ad hoc pattern of presence.

The degree of institutionalization of the non-teaching work practices and beliefs may vary in different school types and cultures, different teachers with different years of experience and positions, and different kinds of work. We can see

that senior teachers as Miss Yau and Mr. Leung, though taking up heavy administrative or non-teaching work, are more adaptive to this kind of work. They give meanings to this work and think that it is worth doing and sometimes a part of teachers' responsibilities to do this. It is hard to identify to what extent each factor is affecting this outcome or if it is just an affective infinity. It is meaningful for further exploring this intellectual aspect at a deeper level. In the data provided, we can conclude that the institutionalized rules on non-teaching work are not well-defined and controlled in the formal structure of the school organization. Teachers do not have a set of scripted routine or schema to follow. And the non-teaching duties tend to generate tension on their work.

5.1.2 Principal

Besides the non-teaching work, teachers also identify some of the constraints in work which make them feel stressful. First of all, some organizational theories claim that teachers' work is tightly controlled by the hierarchical structure. Teachers are controlled in every aspect of their work. It is true partially. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the formal teaching work is shaped by the institutional forces rather than the organizational one. On the other hand, the administrative work is not as free as the formal teaching work. In the survey, more than 50% of the informants think that they have "little" or "no" freedom on administrative work (Table 5.5). Regarding the other non-teaching works such as "students counseling" and "participating in teaching-related activities outside school", less than a half of the informants claim that they have freedom on arranging those duties (Table 5.5). Besides, in the survey, more than 70% of the informants claim that the teaching effectiveness or quality will be affected by the superiors' or the principal's opinions. It shows that they experience organizational control on the work

outside classroom. However, to what extent and in what aspects do the teachers experience control from their superior?

Table 5.5 The Extent of Autonomy on Non-teaching Work (%)

	Very free	Free	Neutral	Constrained	Very constrained
(1) Curriculum amendment	6.6	25.0	34.2	28.9	5.3
(2) Participation of activities related to teaching outside school	9.2	36.8	40.8	11.8	1.3
(3) Participation of activities <i>not</i> related to teaching outside school	10.7	34.7	32.0	21.3	1.3
(4) Decision on subject matter	4.0	32.0	41.3	22.7	0.0
(5) Setting examination papers	13.3	41.3	40.0	4.0	1.3
(6) Administrative matters	2.7	14.7	33.3	30.7	18.7
(7) Student counseling	14.5	38.2	32.9	11.8	2.6

In the interviews, Miss Chan points out that the principal sometimes would be a source of work pressure:

“Pressure also comes from the principal. He sometimes passes by and asks you the passing rate [of the open examinations]. You know, it’s hard to give him answer. It’s difficult to predict how many pupils will pass.”

The passing rate in the open examination seems very important in the secondary school system. Mr. Cheng, who is also teaching higher forms, also reveals that the principal exerts pressure on him when asking him about the performance of students in the open examination:

“The pressure is originated from the open examinations. ... The HKCEE curriculum...For instance, if you had a passing rate of 50% last year, he will expect you get not less than that this year. You have to keep up with the

performance. To achieve this you have much more workload consequently such as tests, make-up classes, marking exercises. That is the work pressure. If you expect a group of students can get an “A”, you’ll feel the pressure.”

It seems from the above that the principals do have the power to make teachers conform to some kind of work, such as attending to the interview for this research. However, we also have to focus on the incorporation of some discourses which do have meanings to them. For example, Miss Wong reveals that there is an English campaign which requires every English subject teachers to participate. Some of the teachers are not willing to do it but they have to do it. Principals as the superordinate in the school organization have the power to tell the teachers what to do. Teachers will face some organizational or occupational penalty if they do not conform to such decision.

When further analyzing the aspects of the principals to exert power on teachers, it is found that the principal largely weighs on some indicators which demonstrate the performance of the school to the public. We take the passing rate discussed above as an example. The passing rate is a commonly used indicator to show the performance of the school to the public. Mr. Cheng pinpoints the symbolic meaning behind “passing rate”:

“The pressure from the open examinations must be there. It is claimed that the spirit of education should not only aim at the performance in the open examinations. It is solely a superficial work. It is not the truth. At least you have to catch up with the standard with the neighbor schools, not too distant from the others. ... Especially in the recent few years, the pressure from it is increased. [Why?] You have to take up new students. The mass media such as newspapers will disclose the performance of the open examinations to the public, to see which one is better. And they will give comments on it. This is

where pressure from. ... There is only one objective indicator [to measure the performance of a school]—the open examination result. Have you ever heard that the behavioral performance of students is counted into the performance standard? It is never counted.”

It shows that the passing rate of the open examination does have its own effect on the legitimation of a school. It functions as an important symbol or indicators for all the participants as well as the members in society to evaluate the performance of the school. The passing rate originally is a percentage representing the proportion of the students getting passed in five subjects in the open examinations. It is institutionalized in the organizational level as an enactment of organizational effectiveness. However, it is not successfully institutionalized into the daily practices of teachers. Teachers have different interpretations and meanings of the “passing rate”. Not all teachers who teach higher forms aim solely at increasing the passing rate as they encounter some inconsistencies and constraints in their work. Yet, teachers cannot refuse or even resist the power of the symbolic effects of the “indicator” but put great efforts on it in their daily work.

5.1.3 Parents and Local community

Parents and the local community are also manifest factors appearing in the discourses of teachers in the interviews. The family backgrounds of the students are considered as the constraints in work. When asked about what they consider the leading motivation for students to learn, some of respondents points out that the socio-economic level of the secondary school local community is one of the main reasons. This constrain is more prevalent in the interviews with the secondary school teachers.

“[Which part of your work do you think is the most exhausted?] In recent years, it should be the parents. In some cases you have nothing to do to help the students because the family background is so poor. It is possible they have one father and two mothers. This is what happens in reality. There was a case...when I was the class master in that year teaching a F.3 class. Half of the class was come from single-parent family. If you ask them to work hard, they would never think about it. They would be rather thinking about the family issues. It is all affecting the emotion of a student in school. It's nothing to do with what teaching method you use or how well you teach. What you have to do is to focus on his personal growth rather than the academic performance. It is a serious problem. The social workers can do nothing at all too. There are too many cases like this.” (Miss Liu)

“Some students are doing part time jobs. What you can do is only to talk to them and persuade them the consequences of doing part time job after school. It will affect their academic result. ... But it also requires parents' cooperation. Sometimes the parents will let their children do it. This is one of the little conflicts with them. When you discuss with them about it, they will claim that they will only their children in holidays. Therefore, we expect the parents to cooperate with us sometimes. But on the other hand, I understand that the economic situation now is not that good. The parents hope their children to earn money as early as they can to ease the financial problem of the family.” (Miss Chan)

Miss Liu and Miss Chan point out that the characteristics of the students are shaped and influenced by their family background and the community. Mr. Cheng also contends that the culture of society discourages the learning motivation of the students:

“The social factor is the main effect. The external environment is not good enough to provide a good learning culture. The culture is very shoddy. It is the responsibility of the government to boost up the culture. The officials just demand the accountability of teachers. Teachers have been forced to bear all the responsibility for the downgrading of the English standard of Hong Kong students. I had been a language teacher for two years. What we can do is

extremely limited. For instance, if a pupil goes to see a doctor, can he tell the doctor his illness in English? When he goes to the market, does he know the names of the vegetables he wants to buy? The whole society fails to provide an atmosphere for learning English. In contrast to Singapore, if you enter a fast food shop, the shop-keepers there all speak English. The whole atmosphere lets you learn English. The foreigners like to read books. We like to read books too. But we read books about horseracing. This culture cannot encourage students to learn English well. Not only the standard of English but also that of Chinese is lagging behind in other places. The government does not create a proper culture. The popular culture nowadays.... Recently I read a piece of news; a pop star said that it was cool to smoke. ... Students read newspaper. They would realize it. The whole atmosphere of the society is affecting the students.”

He further emphasizes that what a teacher can do to this situation is very limited:

“Problems exist: The standard of English is deteriorating and the moral standard also worsening. ... The whole culture is not good. We are very passive as we are just staying here inside school. Why are there so many students taking the wrong path (行差踏錯)? The whole atmosphere is not good. If the government does want to promote non-smoking campaign, they have to find someone who is really a non-smoker. Then, it would not be discovered by the reporters. If you just leave everything to the educational or school level, it is surely much more ineffective and difficult to handle it.”

He thinks that the society as a whole is affecting the students’ behaviors. It makes educators powerless in educating the students. Moreover, he also thinks that the family background of the students is also one of the factors attributed to the deviance.

“As a teacher, it is difficult to quantify how much we can do or have done. ... The parents do not have reading habits. They seldom read. How do you expect his children to read? ... Most of the students in this school are from the lower class. You can see it in this local community.”

Mr. Leung's view points out the immediate constraints of teachers in their immediate workplace. Their teaching practices are shaped by the institutional environment, in which they can get a routine or scripts of formal teaching. However, in reality, they, on the other hand, have some constraints from larger society which affects their teaching performance. Teachers have a variety of views towards the roles and effects of the parents and the local community. From institutional perspective, the roles of the parents and the local community are not well-defined in education as an institution. It lacks commonly shared interpretations of the contexts of the roles of the parties.

It then echoes with Dreeben's theory of Coupling structure of school claiming that the condition of teaching is set in the upper level, such as the local community and local society. It is true that Dreeben's model does cast some light on the interviews. However, there is also a point to note further. Dreeben claims that the upper levels set the condition and constraints to the adjacent lower level. And the flow of influence is organizational. It means that this model put great emphasis on the policy influence and the power relations between any two levels. It is a vertical and one-way flow of influence. However, in the interviews, the teachers are not passively influenced by the environment but are conscious of the influence of the community and try to figure out the reasons affecting the motivations of the students. As it will be shown below, teachers do have some coping strategies to minimize the uncertainties and inconsistencies in their daily work.

5.1.4 Educational Policy

Besides, the educational policy is also an empirical factor affecting the real

teaching in teachers’ point of view. Much literature and research has proved the influences of policies to teachers’ work. And we are sure that any policy change will generate a change in teachers’ daily work. Educational policy is commonly viewed as a form of organizational forces which constrain real teaching and keep teachers from falling into the conflict perspective. In both the survey and the interviews, when asking about the source of pressure, many of the teachers reveal that the fluctuations of the educational policies make them feel exhausted. They also reveal such influence on their teaching work. In the survey, about 80% of the informants claim that the “consistency of the education policy” affects their teaching performances and teaching effectiveness (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6 Factors Affecting the Teaching Effectiveness or Quality (%)

	Very influential	Influential	Neutral	Indifferent	Very indifferent
(1) Parents' opinions	3.8	30.8	39.7	19.2	6.2
(2) Principal's or superior's opinions	21.8	51.3	25.6	1.3	0.0
(3) Colleague's opinions	9.0	66.7	23.1	1.3	0.0
(4) Pre-job training	15.4	57.7	24.4	2.6	0.0
(5) On-job training	20.5	53.8	25.6	0.0	0.0
(6) Workload	66.7	25.6	7.7	0.0	0.0
(7) Personal experience	57.7	33.3	9.0	26.0	16.9
(8) Non-teaching work or responsibilities	26.0	53.2	16.9	3.9	0.0
(9) Mass media	14.3	41.6	27.3	11.7	5.2
(10) Family background of students	34.6	38.5	24.4	2.6	0.0
(11) Teaching technologies	2.6	32.1	51.3	12.8	1.3
(12) Political or other professional parties	0.0	6.4	37.2	41.0	15.4
(13) Stability of educational policy	37.2	43.6	15.4	2.6	1.3

In the interviews, a number of teachers complain that the educational

policy exerts great impact on their daily work. Mr. Cheng, for example, states that it would be a failure of all education policies unless the whole societal culture could be changed:

“The government should not intervene too much of education, including the curriculum. Otherwise, the more the government has to take control, the worse the result. Many policies would fail to be implemented finally. It is a waste of time and energy unless it takes teachers’ point of view into consideration. They are at the back, sitting in the office. Realizing the success of education in Australia or other places, they [policy makers] copy the system directly. But can you see how many pupils in a class there? Singapore is successful in promoting English standard. But can you see they communicate in English when they are 1-year old? It is useless to introduce the Language Proficiency Test.... You have to take our unique situation into account to make appropriate and wise decisions. Don’t copy others’ system without thinking. Don’t use the way the others do just because it sounds great in their proposals or dissertations. Or any policy will destined to a failure”

Mr. Cheng expresses his own opinion on the reason of the failure in implementing the education policy. In the interview with Miss Chan, she also reveals that the language policy becomes a big obstacle in her work:

“There are a lot of changes and reforms in our recent educational policies. It changes dramatically in a very short period of time. You will never know which is the final and true one. For instance, it is announced that the syllabus of F.5 English will be altered. But then it is not changed. You know education is not a thing which you can make a change in a short time. Suddenly we are required to sit for an examination. Too many education reforms... the senior officials do not have a clear objective or direction. ... It changes too quickly. Education policy is a long term goal. I think it can’t be changed in such short period of time. This is what many teachers are facing.”

Miss Chan thinks that the educational policy is one of the main sources of pressure in

her daily work. We can see from the above that though the teaching practices are institutionalized in the workplace, teachers still have uncertainties and strains in their work, especially in the non-teaching work. Besides, the principal, the local community, the parents and the education policy are all exerting pressure on and constraining teachers' work. The extent of effect of each dimension may be different to different teachers, school types and the subject they teach as teachers all have their own positioning in the education structure and the corresponding external environment.

However, we easily neglect to understand how teachers react to this changing environment. According to the neo-institutional perspective on the organizational action, the actors in the institution are semi-automatic and rational. I argue that teachers lack institutionalized practices and beliefs in some areas of their work which causes uncertainties and inconsistencies in their work. So their actions are more rational when institutional references are absent in the environment. How do they cope with it? They do not only behave passively under those constraints.

5.2 Coping Strategies as Practices

5.2.1 Intrinsic Reward

To ease the uncertainties and inconsistencies in their daily work, teachers have their coping strategies. From the findings, they shift their focus on students' behavioral performance from the students' academic result or performance to obtain their job satisfaction. Their source of job satisfaction is not mainly from the formal goal of teaching – the academic performance of the students. Rather, it is mainly come from the immediate behavioral performance of students in class, and the moral conduct of students.

From the survey, the informants show that they put great emphasis on reading the behavioral response or performance of students as the means of self-evaluation of teaching performance. All of the informed teachers reveal that they will evaluate their teaching performance by “students’ behavioral performances and responses in class” and among them, more than 60% think that they “always” use it as the means of self-evaluation (Table 5.7). On the other hand, only 11.5% of them “always” evaluate their teaching performances by student’s academic result. It implies that it is common in teaching discourse to claim that the goal is to enhance teaching effectiveness; however, it is also a fact that teachers are not oriented to student’s academic performance, at least, not as their pursuit of self enhancing or egotistical upgrading. They want to achieve goals beyond teaching effectiveness.

Table 5.7 The Way Teachers Evaluate Their Teaching Performances

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
(1) Students' academic performances	11.5	73.1	15.4	0.0
(2) Students' behavioral performances and responses in lessons	62.8	37.2	0.0	0.0
(3) Students' conduct	23.1	61.5	14.1	1.3
(4) Students' respect	39.7	53.8	5.1	1.3
(5) Colleagues' or superiors' appraisal	14.1	59.0	25.6	1.3
(6) Evaluation report	15.4	50.0	32.1	2.6

In the interviews, the teachers also state that the behavioral improvement of the students makes them feel most satisfied. When asked about which part of the work make them feel most satisfied, they replied:

“When they concentrate on the lesson, and are willing to do the class work, and when they listen to you.” (Miss Lee)

“To see the growth of students. They learn something and apply that. These are not only limited to academic, as well as the moral conduct. If I can teach him to be a good person and he really learns it, it’s really good. Whatever the improvement in knowledge or behaviors will make me feel happy.” (Miss Chan)

Miss Lee and Miss Chan both gain their job satisfaction from the behavioral aspects or the immediate improvement of behavioral performance. In order to maintain the certainty, they shift the focus to the behavioral aspects of the students rather than those set in the formal structure. By doing this, the inconsistencies they experience in the real work place are downplayed.

5.2.2 Credentials and Professional Development

To cope with the changing expectations and the uncertainties in work, the acquisition of credentials and the participation in professional development become their coping strategies. “Credentials” means the professional qualifications or recognitions a teacher attains personally. Professional development refers to the programs, activities or campaigns for teachers to improve their teaching or work performance. In the interviews with teachers from both schools, teachers also reveal that they participate in professional development at times and in different forms. I have mentioned in the previous chapter that some teachers pursue study just because they have to be qualified to teach particular subject or grade level but the actual difference after the programs are seldom examined formally and closely. Some of teachers participating in the programs or activities about teaching work downplay the importance and empirical help in their work. Some of them even reveal that they have forgotten what they attend in the last few seminars. Miss Lee, expressing the most exhausted work, says that:

“[What do you think is the most exhausting work?] The seminars. Once I had to attend a seminar. Then I had to attend the course afterwards. [Whom was the seminar for?] Teachers. It is arranged by the school, held by the Education Department. ...[All teachers have to attend it?] It was optional, up to individual teacher’s will. Some of them require all teachers to join. They are held in school. ... twice to four times annually. [What was it about?] I forget the topic of the last one... Usually we sat down the stage, looking at them for few hours. [What do these seminars do to your daily work?] In fact, they are not being implemented in this school now. So, we can’t apply it right away. On the other hand, every one sitting there in the seminars didn’t know what’s exactly happening.”

Mr. Cheng, when telling me the shortcomings of make-up classes after school or in other lessons, also reveals that he doesn’t care what the seminars are about:

“A lesson lasts for 40 minutes. If you continue to teach for a long time, the effectiveness will decrease as their concentration decreases. It is not limited to students but also the one who teaches. Sometimes when we attend seminars we will feel difficult too. We will take a short nap too. Similarly, you can’t demand the students to pay attention at every second as you know it is not easy.”

We do not intend to dismiss absolutely the effectiveness of the related programs. Miss Lee and Miss Liu who are both studying some professional development courses say that the courses do help them in upgrading their subject knowledge. However, regarding the actual differences in real teaching, they have mentioned a bit on that:

“[What do you learn from the degree course?] As it is a degree in Education, you have to take some courses such as “teaching equally (有教無類)” and “pedagogy”. Mainly in English, I have learnt more mainly in the language,

the subject knowledge of English. It really helps me in marking the students' exercises. For instance, there is a course on grammar. You have to analyze the grammar sentence by sentence. It is really useful. It does help me a lot. You can't learn this even in AL (Advanced Level Examination). ... It helps in daily marking. I am much more confident in marking their work. When I first graduated and became a new teacher, I was always afraid that I made mistakes on marking. ... [What is the difference in daily work after studying this course?] Be frank, the teaching method learnt in undergraduate is not useful. The course taken now does not focus on teaching method. Only 10/80 credits are confined to pedagogy. There the courses mainly belong to how to set test paper, relatively in macro-scale. But it doesn't teach you how to motivate students. In many cases the teaching method is accumulated and built up consequently along with your own experience or experience of others." (Miss Liu)

We can see that the actual improvements in teaching and students' performance are not evaluated. She expects that she will be able to, and the principal will let her to teach higher forms once she has attained the degree in Education. The symbolic meaning of the qualification is more important than the actual improvements in performance on the technical core function. Miss Lee, on the other hand, assures the difference after taking the Putonghua course:

"[What did you learn from the course?] It is multi-dimensional – the teaching method, listening, oral, and writing skills. ... [Can you apply what you learnt in the course in real teaching?] Yes. Even if you know Putonghua, the teaching method and the materials are a bit different. Because generally the students don't know Putonghua, in many cases you have to teach through activities and games to encourage them to learn as much as possible. You don't know how to use these methods but only to teach them vocabularies, the texts and play videos. The instructor will show you the common mistakes made by students speaking Cantonese. You will learn how to correct them. The result was quite satisfied when I tried to apply them in class."

From Miss Lee's experience, though she claims that there are some actual

improvements in her real teaching, we can't ignore another side of the fact: her purpose is to gain professional recognition in Putonghua teaching. She mentions that she can speak Putonghua but after the study, she knew more about effective teaching method. The points are, firstly, anyone who can speak Putonghua will not be formally and institutionally legitimated to teach in public. They are required to take the course and achieve for the certificate. Secondly, although she states that she has improvement in real teaching, she will be qualified and legitimated once she has the professional qualification, which has nothing to do with how much she has improved in her real teaching performance. She will not be inspected and evaluated in her real workplace to affirm the actual enactment of this qualification. She, as well as the other parties, will admit her ability in teaching Putonghua because of the credentials she achieved rather than any evaluation of her actual performance in classroom. Therefore, we should not ignore the institutional characteristics of the credentials.

We can see that the institutional influence of the credentials or qualifications of a teacher are more significantly influential than the practical one. It has less to do with the daily practice but the classification of knowledge and status, that is, credentialing certainly has a larger effect. People believe that he or she is able to teach a particular class based on the attained educational credentials. Moreover, the teaching quality is "guaranteed" once they have achieved the educational professional requirement. Some of the interviewees have revealed the practical influences of the professional development programs are very limited in real teaching.

5.3 Collective Resistance as Institutionally Constructed Interest

From the above, we can see that teachers facing some kind of

organizational or external constraints in their work. It contrasts with the practical and taken-for-granted instructional practices in teaching. By the incorporation of the institutionalized rules into the daily practices, as claimed by the Neo-Institutionalist, they will gain legitimacy and avoid inspection and evaluation based on the logic of confidence. However, another side of the coin reveals the actual inconsistent and ineffective working situation generates uncertainty and empirical constraints in their work which are neglected by most studies. How do they survive in this decoupling structure? The data from the interviews and the survey shows that they do have some coping strategies to cope with the inconsistencies in work. They will shift their focus to the behavioral performance especially in class to gain their job satisfaction. This shifts their role function as a buffer in their work lacks institutional rules or scripted programs for making cross reference.

The accountability of teachers is expanding rapidly. Yet there is still little evaluation of instructional activities. On the other hand, the formal structure is largely elaborated. Teachers have to take up more and more administrative work or periphery work in their work place because of the elaboration of the formal structure of school. The social expectations and demands of teachers are changing. It further adds some uncertain elements to teachers' daily work. A few respondents of the open-ended questions reveal the increasing accountability for teachers to fulfill more and more requirements:

“The demands of teachers from society are increasing. I don't mean to object the other parties to express their concerns on school. But it is unfair for the teachers if the public intervene into the educational affairs without a true understanding of it. It causes great pressure and a sense of helplessness of teachers.” (Questionnaire No. 63)

“The social status of teachers is deteriorating. It is originated from the accusations of the government and the public discourses. The government is used to do “scapegoating”—they are used to dedicate all responsibilities for one particular group. For instance, the deterioration of English standard of students is attributed to the English teachers but never take other possible factors into account.” (Questionnaire No. 66)

“I wish that the mass media would not trust some businessman, thinking that the average quality of the teaching profession is downgrading. Secondly, do not accused teachers for the deterioration of students’ performance. The rapid-changing policy which emphasizes inhuman elements (such as I.T.) is the main cause of the lack of time to take care of students.” (Questionnaire No. 67)

From the points of view of the above respondents, they all think that the social expectations and demands of teachers are changing, and in a sense, expanding. The new expectations continue to increase on the top of the traditional one. Teachers are not only expected to teach in classroom, but also expected to perform some other work in school administration and student activities. The role of teachers is expanding. The responsibilities and the work they have to take up are increasing quantitatively and qualitatively. Nevertheless, the expansion of the roles and expectations in the non-instructional domain are ill defined. They have not been formalized or rationalized in the teaching as an institution in modern educational organization. That means, what is normatively a part of work of a “teacher”? Is it their responsibilities to take up the administrative work? What kinds and how much of administrative work should they take up? What are the definitions of roles and division of labor of teachers, parents and principals in educational system so that they can have a more effective cooperation? Those questions seem not well defined in educational as an institution in modern society. With the fast-changing concepts of

education and modern society, the traditional teaching practices have not yet been disposed. This results in the intensification of teachers' work since the past decade.

As claimed by the neo-institutionalists, the elaboration of the formal structure can gain legitimacy from wider society. Teachers do not and cannot deny the elaboration of the formal structure in which they need to maintain their legitimacy. That means they will not and cannot refuse the expansion of role and responsibilities. They, on the contrary, have to conform to the changing and demanding social expectations to maintain their legitimacy from society though they hold different views on these periphery works.

In a sense, the discourses about the constraints defined by teachers interviewed and surveyed are, to a certain extent, homogeneous. Teachers from both of schools, teaching different subjects, having different years of experiences identify the source of pressure in a similar way. For instance, most of them point out the deteriorating of students' standard in contemporary society. They agreed on the view that the students nowadays are different from the past as today's students require you to give much more care and attention to them, who live in a world full of temptations, and who are more difficult to be taught. Most of the interviewees think that it also greatly depends on the efforts of individual student. Their views also meet at the point that it is unfair for teachers to bear all the responsibilities on the academic performance of students. They demand for a bigger space for teachers to be released from all kinds of accountability. They demand more respects from others in school and in society. Thus, though the teachers interviewed came from different backgrounds, they have similar views on teachers' lives and expectations.

In order to resolve the uncertainties and inconsistencies in work, teachers have some coping strategies. The coping strategies are to solve the immediate situation in their work; the teachers, meanwhile, have a collective ideological system in the discourse. This discourse is sustained upon the ideology of professionalism.

All in all, teachers' work activities and beliefs are shaped and constructed by the institutional environment. The "myth of professionalism" plays a pivot role to shape the behavioral patterns of teachers in Hong Kong. It affects the instructional as well as the non-instructional works of teachers. As the instructional work is highly standardized in the educational system, the teaching practices and beliefs demonstrate a high level of homogeneity. Teachers organize their formal instructional work in a similar way and hold similar interpretations towards the ritual classifications despite teaching in the isolated classroom. On the other hand, as the non-instructional work has not been well defined in the institutional environment, teacher holds different views and perceptions towards this aspect of work. There is also a lack of well-defined roles and responsibilities for teachers to cope with the non-teaching work. That means the roles and expectations has not been fully institutionalized and rationalized in the educational system. However, whatever they respond to the expansion of roles and expectations, they think that professionalization is important for them to get rid of these constraints. It shows that the ideology of professionalism does affect their work in many aspects.

CHAPTER 6

Some Concluding Remarks

6.1 Summary and Discussion

This studies the organization of teaching, particularly in the content of Hong Kong teaches. By studying teaching practices and belief systems of Hong Kong teachers, I argue that both the standardization and the inconsistencies of their teaching practices and beliefs are shaped by some wider institutional forces. In other words, the interests, beliefs and perceptions of teachers are shaped, defined and refined by the institutional environment. Teachers, on the one hand, organize their formal instructional work upon some highly institutionalized ritual classifications and practices which give rise to a high level of standardization and homogeneity in their work patterns and teaching perceptions as this aspect of work is well defined and legitimated in the institutional environment. And on the other hand, teachers hold different views towards work that is not directly related to formal teaching. Views that are expressed by the teachers sometimes are even contradictory to each other. The inconsistencies of their views toward non-teaching tasks might imply that the non-teaching work is ill-defined and has not been rationalized and formalized in the wider society. Despite the opposing features of two aspects of teachers' work, I argue that both the standardization and inconsistency of teachers' perceptions toward work are shaped by the wider institutional environment hinged on the ideology of professionalism.

In my study, there reveals a high level of homogeneity in the instructional practices. In general, teachers express that they have a certain extent of autonomy in

formal teaching. Ordinarily, one might have expected that this autonomy would engender a greater variety of pedagogical methods inside classrooms, and yet, contrary to my expectation, teaching methods adopted in classroom teaching showed a remarkable level of homogeneity both in instructional activities and teachers' behavioral patterns. It is found that the homogeneity is less originated from organizational structure but rather from some wider cultural or ideological forces. I identified some highly standardized and widely shared categorizations in the educational system. These include student classifications, teacher classifications, school classifications and topic classifications. These existed classifications significantly shape and affect the teaching activities, their expectation and belief systems. For example, the student classifications of grade level and "good" and "bad" class are found to have influence on the teachers' behaviors and perceptions of their work and clientele in a significant magnitude, classifications which may have little to do with the actual and specific examination of the student's actual characteristics and performances; teachers regard teaching P.2 Mathematics is totally different from teaching P.4 Mathematics. The conceptions and interpretations of these classifications are already well defined in the wider social environment as they are commonly understood and shared by the teachers and the general public. These ritual classifications are universalistic and highly standardized not only in the school as an organization but also in the wider social, or even cultural environment. Therefore, they are also institutionalized and function as "real" within the organization and affect teachers' perception of teaching activities and other role taking.

The incorporation of the ritual classification can legitimize the instruction

work through the logic of confidence (Meyer and Rowan 1978, 1992). By assembling the ritualistic or ceremonial classifications and taken-for-granted practices, teachers are able to demonstrate, and are believed to teach properly and effectively as expected with a high level of autonomy in instructional work. The finding showed that assigning homework is a prevalent taken-for-granted practice in daily school life. Homework is an indicator for teachers to keep track on their teaching schedule and enhance student learning in a professionally meaningful way. Yet, the actual function of homework in the schooling process and technical improvement of students are scarcely examined. Teachers just take it for granted as a routine in their work. Homework as a teaching practice is highly institutionalized into the educational system. The institutionalization of ritual classifications and teaching practices offers teachers legitimacy of doing their job properly. As a result, they can continue to enjoy a large extent of autonomy in classroom teaching as long as they perform their “face work” properly by incorporating normative and institutional elements into their daily practices.

Teachers organize their instructional work so that they can avoid inspection and evaluation of the internal classroom activities. This is coherent with the ideology of professionalism which highlights the importance of autonomy in the work place. Classroom as the main work place in the school organization, the autonomy of teachers are found to be most integral to the teachers’ identity. The tightly controlled ritual classifications such as teacher training and qualifications, the more “professional” teachers are to be expected, and the safer buffer of institutional activities. Therefore, the instructional work is shaped and affected by the wider institutional environment centered on the notion of modern “professionalism”.

Teachers do not always show a high level of homogeneity in all aspects of their work. They do have different views on the obstacles and constraints in some other areas of their work. Most teachers identify some obstacles and constraints in non-instructional work areas such as administrative responsibilities, the accountability to parents and educational authorities etc.. These obstacles may be originated from the hierarchically organizational structure, the general public in wider society such as the media. It is not surprising to find that teachers are well aware of some constraints in their work place, but it is interesting to discover that teachers in fact have different or even contradicting view on the constraints of their work. While some teachers think that the administrative work is time-consuming with low effectiveness and a source of work pressure, some regard it as a normative part of their work and some even devoted quite extensively to administrative work. Besides, some of the informants view that “professional development” has little to do with their teaching effectiveness, but some of them believe that it is useful of which the effect may not be obvious in the short term. Teachers hold varied views toward non-teaching activities, adopt and cope with these tasks in different manners. Unlike a more homogeneous attitude and practice adopted in formal teaching, the more fragmented and varied views toward non-formal work tasks warrant our attention and deserve some sociological explanations.

Although teachers may hold different stances towards the constraints and obstacles in work, teachers believe that *professional development* is a way to ease the uncertainties induced from the non-instructional work, if only we also consider the nature of these activities in the realm of professional development is usually

“educational”, or self-improvement or enhancement more than as a formal assessment of teachers’ work performance. Consequently, it implies that participation in professional development is widely adopted in the teaching profession as a coping strategy to maintain certainty and ease the constraints in the long run.

The idea of “professionalism” serves as an institutionalized ideology in teaching as a profession and as an institution. It is meaningful of this changing perception that further enriches our understanding of modern institution. If the ideology of professionalism is institutionalized in the teaching profession, how can we explain the inconsistent views towards non-instructional work? To be a professional, they expect to enjoy a high level of autonomy in the technical core function of the organization and free from external constraints. It seems that the receptive view towards the non-teaching work contradicts with the professional ideals of teachers.

As an educational organization in modern society, school has to incorporate a set of rules that are pertaining to the betterment of society in the institutional environment. Teachers, who work in the organization, also have to incorporate these elements so as to survive and maintain certainty and consistence in their work place. As the formal structure of education is changing, schools have to continue to incorporate the new elements prevalent in the wider environment so as to maintain the legitimacy of a “modern institution”. For example, they have to incorporate the modern ideologies such as child-centered pedagogy, activity-oriented approach into their local place, that is, the school. However, the old practices of teaching continue to exist or left deinstitutionalized in the day-to-day work lives of teachers (for

example, though a sheer amount of studies show the ineffectiveness of lecturing approach compared to other pedagogical approaches, most teachers still adopt it in daily teaching). As a result, these innovations or newly defined ideologies or practices cannot be channeled down to day-to-day level of educational practices and the old conventions remain undeleted. Teachers indeed have to meet the formal and newly endorsed version of pedagogical or cultural practices while not being able to abandon the old forms. This is where our teachers find the current teaching conditions unfavorable and constitute tension and constraints. It is not surprising that teaching activities inside schools reveal a more “decoupled” nature of organizational practices than any real effect of educational activities can be assessed. It also implies that this kind of innovations or fast-changing social expectations are not always well realized and effectively implemented in the reality of school setting. In my study, it is exactly the non-teaching area that reflects such an incoherence of organizational effectiveness.

The failure of the formalization of the definition of teachers’ roles and responsibilities beyond formal teaching has two implications and consequences. First, the teaching profession has not been able to establish a collectively shared conceptions and meaning system of non-instructional work. Therefore, individual teachers may have different or even contradicting views towards their work. If they are institutionalized, as formal teaching are, teachers are expected to have a similar views and perceptions towards non-instructional work in their work place.

Second, teachers working in modern educational organization unavoidably bear a high level of uncertainty in their work due to the intensifications of the newly

rationalized and expanded roles that demand teachers to follow on top of their traditional roles and norms. This inconsistent expectations and definitions of teachers' role are especially intense in the recent worldwide movement of educational reforms that frequently call upon a version of interdependence of school and society. This inevitably exerts pressure and tension on teachers in their workplace. Therefore, not only formal instructional practices and beliefs, but also the non-teaching work of teachers are shaped by the forces from the external environment existing in forms of prevalent ideology which affect their work perceptions and experience to a large extent rest upon the "myth of professionalism" (Meyer and Rowan 1978, 1992).

Professionalism functions as a worldwide and collectively consented movement almost in all professions in this decade. The institutionalization of "professionalism" serves as a powerful ideology among professionals and in the case of teachers, they strike for a higher level of autonomy and less non-instructional work responsibilities in their daily work. The credentials like pre-job training certifications, the educational qualifications teachers obtained at the time of entering the career, or the expertise knowledge on the subjects and pedagogies are all crucial to the legitimization in the educational system. The findings revealed is consistent with the idea of "myth of professionalism" suggested by Meyer and Rowan (Meyer and Rowan 1978), which pinpoints the fact that the ideology of professionalization per se serves a powerful and determinant factor of the life courses of individuals and the survival of the organization. The actual differences, improvements, or effectiveness, in technical performance after, and the contexts of the courses, workshops, or programs of the professional development are scarcely investigated.

People believe that a “graduate” teacher is more “professional” than a “non-graduate” teacher without knowing the specific differences, strengths and weaknesses of the teacher.

The idea of professionalization is crucial in modern society. It gives a life-long social and professional identity to teachers. Most importantly, it is assumed to be a normative benchmark of authoritative knowledge and personnel not only by those who have gone through the processing, that is teachers, but also by those who have not – the public. Therefore, it is not uncommon to see that the inspection of internal classroom activities from the external environment is almost absent. As a result, the legitimacy of teachers can be consolidated. It also serves to stabilize the uncertain and inconsistent working environment in the organization. As a highly institutionalized organization, school has to maintain its legitimacy—an especially crucial task in the changing institutional environment.

The relationship between society and educational organization is extremely close and complex. They are interdependent to each other. Education is the most powerful institution in modern society to allocate individuals into different arenas of society. It plays a pivotal role to reorganize the modern society (Meyer 1983). However, the survival and existence of educational system also relies on its charter with the society, a kind of social contract that builds upon the good faith of functioning and complex organizational principles. Society charters different and distinct elements in the educational system. To gain legitimacy from the society, teachers working in the organization also rely heavily on the charter and legitimization from the society. This is well reflected in the modern motion of

professionalism, teachers have to uphold the ideology of professionalism, claimed to be beneficial to the educational system, as well as to the progress of society.

6.2 Implications

According to Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1978, 1992), the institutional environment in which the organization is embedded is full of inconsistency. As teachers incorporate a package of institutionalized elements from the environment, they inevitably are handling a package that is full of inconsistency. Teachers are required to fulfill professional qualifications in their spare time; meanwhile, the increasing workloads especially in the area of non-teaching do not allow them to participate freely in activities as they like after school. As Waller suggests, teachers are caught in a dilemma in their workplace. In this case, the dilemma of the teachers in Hong Kong is not limited to activities inside classroom but in their day-to-day chores in their work place and outside of their workplace.

Working in a contradicting and inconsistent environment for a long time causes teachers in Hong Kong suffer from great pressure and tension. While the legitimating of teaching rests upon the taken-for-granted training credential and norms and standards of the modern professions, the fact that schools as organizations continue to incorporate fashionable goals and practices that are generated in the wider educational model in itself also become the source of the intensification of teaching, and therefore give rise to inconsistency in the work place. Overlooking the gap between this changing conception of school and society in the wider culture will hinder the effectiveness of any educational reforms that are introduced for the betterment of society.

6.3 Research Limitations

There are some limitations of this research especially in methodological approach. Due to the expanding accountability of school to the community and the general public, schools have become very cautious about revealing their internal operation and activities to outsiders. Therefore, I only manage to solicit support and assistance from two schools where teachers were interviewed. Apparently, the scope of my research is not as extensive, and therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution although the survey data is a supplement to the overall analysis. Moreover, I have not been able to generate a cross-time study, for a longitudinal study will certainly offer a more comprehensive view to the evolution and meaning of the professional actions and culture of teaching in Hong Kong.

Notwithstanding the caveats of my research strategies, as an exploratory study, the findings did reveal the micro process of the organization of teaching in school, as well as the educational reality that is constantly shaped by larger forces in society. A larger scale of research on the organization of teaching in Hong Kong is required to understand better the working conditions of teachers in Hong Kong. My study, perhaps, offers a starting point for useful hypothesis to be generated within this framework of organization of teaching in Hong Kong and further expand our horizon of inquiries into the sociology of teaching.

Teachers play an important role in educational system all over the world. Hong Kong teachers are not exceptional. As the front-line educators in the organization, they are working in an uncertain and inconsistent environment. As Waller (1932) contends that teachers working in the school organization are at the

same time exposed to a wider community that legitimately defines and sets standards of school effectiveness and can enforce these expectations (Bidwell 1965: 98). As the environment is changing rapidly, teachers' working environment changes at top speed as well. Teachers have to catch up with the expectations of the environment and cope with them in order to maintain legitimacy and continue to survive in the educational institution. No doubt, their work is not easy.

The purpose of my study, therefore, is not to disclose the internal ineffectiveness of educational organizations, but rather to demonstrate how effectively modern educational organizations work to maintain their legitimate presence amidst a high standardized and yet inconsistent environment.

Appendix I:

Semi-structured Interview Questions (in Chinese)

訪問問題

背景資料

- 入職經過: 如何成為一教師?
- 教齡: 成為教師多少年?
- 主要任教的科目及班級

(一) 教學上

- 上課形式: 多會採用甚麼形式上課? (討論、問答、講課... 等等)
- 課程設計: 不同的課(班級)會否採用不同的教學法?
- 課堂管理: 對你來說, 甚麼是「有效的教學」?

(二) 行政及非教學工作上

- 在學校的其他職責: 行政、學科、課外活動或其他單位的職務
- 時間分配: 如何分配時間及重要性
- 工作中的滿足感及壓力來源
- 工作上的難題

(三) 對教學的看法

- 好教師具備的質素
- 終身職業?
- 自己的一套教學目標或理想

這問卷目的在了解教師在學校內的日常工作及對教學的看法。問卷資料將作為本人在香港中文大學社會學系一份有關「教師與學校組織」的碩士論文一部份。

教師作為最前線工作者，在教育制度中擔當重要的角色。近年的教育政策更著力推行大規模教師隊伍的改革。可是，關於教師的日常工作及他們的觀點卻相對少有受到關注。是次有關教師工作的研究就嘗試了解教師的看法及觀點，相信這對於教育發展，教師的角色以至學術討論都具益處。

所有問卷資料將以不記名方式處理，並只作研究分析之用，個人資料將絕對保密。懇請填妥問卷，並放入已貼上郵票的回郵信封內寄回便可。

多謝合作!

甲、背景資料

(1) 性別:

- ☐ **M**
- ☐ **F**

(2) 年齡:

- ☐ **25 或以下**
- ☐ **26-30**
- ☐ **31-35**
- ☐ **36-40**
- ☐ **41-45**
- ☐ **46-50**
- ☐ **50 或以上**

(3) 婚姻狀況:

- ☐ 未婚
- ☐ 已婚
- ☐ 其他

(4) 子女數目:

- ☐ **0**
- ☐ **1**
- ☐ **2**
- ☐ **3 或以上**

(5) 任教學校:

- ☐ 小學
- ☐ 中學

(6) 教齡 (包括這學年):

- ☐ **1-3**
- ☐ **4-6**
- ☐ **7-9**
- ☐ **10-15**
- ☐ **16-20**
- ☐ **21-25**
- ☐ **25 或以上**

(7) 請圈出你目前任教科目的代表數字(可多於一項)

1. 中文	2. 英文
3. 數學	4. 科學
5. 音樂	6. 體育
7. 美術	8. 電腦
9. 宗教	10. 歷史
11. 社會經濟科	12. 其他: 請註明: _____

乙、教學上

<(8-9) 請參照列(一)，在括號內填上代表的數字。>

列(一)

1. 問答形式
2. 小組討論 (Group Discussion)
3. 自由討論 (Free Talk)
4. 活動形式
5. 講課形式
6. 個別指導
7. 其他，請註明: _____

(8) a. 我最常用的上課形式: ()

b. 我次常用的上課形式: ()

(9) a. 我認為最有效的教學形式: ()

b. 我認為次有效的教學形式: ()

(10) 你認為是在一課堂中哪一項是重要的？

	非常重要 ➡ 非常不重要				
1. 完成課程進度	1	2	3	4	5
2. 讓學生掌握學科知識	1	2	3	4	5
3. 讓學生對學科產生興趣	1	2	3	4	5
4. 維持課室秩序	1	2	3	4	5
5. 教授課本以外的知識	1	2	3	4	5
6. 品德教育	1	2	3	4	5
7. 訓練學生獨立思考	1	2	3	4	5
8. 令學生留心上課	1	2	3	4	5
9. 建立良好師生關係	1	2	3	4	5
10. 其他，請註明: _____	1	2	3	4	5

丙、行政及其他非教學職務

(11) 你還有其他教學以外的職責嗎?

1. 有 <請圈出列(二)中代表數字> 2. 沒有 (可跳至丁部)



列(二)

1. 班主任	7. 學校校隊
2. 入學組	8. 擇業及升學組
3. 輔導組	9. 科技或技術組
4. 資源組	10. 圖書館
5. 學術或學科主任	11. 家長教師會
6. 課外活動或學生活動	12. 其他，請註明: _____

(12) 在學校裡，你花多少時間在以下各項工作呢?

	經常	—————>			從不
1. 備課	1	2	3	4	
2. 教學	1	2	3	4	
3. 批改學生作業	1	2	3	4	
4. 輔導學生或接見學生	1	2	3	4	
5. 行政事務	1	2	3	4	
6. 行政會議	1	2	3	4	
7. 家長教師會或接見家長	1	2	3	4	
8. 學科會議	1	2	3	4	
9. 其他功能單位工作	1	2	3	4	
10. 填寫各項報告	1	2	3	4	
11. 其他，請註明: _____	1	2	3	4	

<(13-14) 請參照上表，在括號內填上代表的數字，最多可填兩項。>

(13) 最令我感到吃力的工作: ()()

(14) 最令我感到滿足的工作: ()()

(15) 作為一教師，你在以下的項目有多少決策自由呢?

	絕對自由	—————>				沒有自由
1. 教學方法	1	2	3	4	5	
2. 學生功課量	1	2	3	4	5	
3. 教學材料	1	2	3	4	5	


4. 修改課程(如增加或減少)	1	2	3	4	5
5. 參與校外有關教學的活動	1	2	3	4	5
6. 參與校外有關非教學的活動 (如他興趣活動)	1	2	3	4	5
7. 在學科決議上	1	2	3	4	5
8. 擬定試卷	1	2	3	4	5
9. 行政職務	1	2	3	4	5
10. 學生的心理輔導	1	2	3	4	5

丁、對教學的看法

(16) 你認為以下項目對教學質素及效能有多少影響?

	很大影響  沒有影響				
1. 家長意見	1	2	3	4	5
2. 校長或主任意見	1	2	3	4	5
3. 同事意見	1	2	3	4	5
4. 職前專業訓練	1	2	3	4	5
5. 在職培訓或課程	1	2	3	4	5
6. 工作量的多少	1	2	3	4	5
7. 個人經驗	1	2	3	4	5
8. 非教學工作或職責	1	2	3	4	5
9. 傳媒影響	1	2	3	4	5
10. 學生的家庭背景	1	2	3	4	5
11. 教學科技	1	2	3	4	5
12. 政黨或其他社會團體的參與	1	2	3	4	5
13. 教育政策的穩定性	1	2	3	4	5

(17) 你怎樣以以下項目評估自己的教學表現嗎?

	經常  從不			
1. 學生成績	1	2	3	4
2. 學生的行為表現或課堂反應	1	2	3	4
3. 學生的品德	1	2	3	4
4. 學生的尊重	1	2	3	4
5. 同事或上級的讚賞	1	2	3	4
6. 評估或考績報告	1	2	3	4

(18) 你對現時的工作有何想法?

	經常				從不
1. 作為一教師,我十分滿意自己的表現	1	2	3		4
2. 我感到十分疲累	1	2	3		4
3. 我不適合教書	1	2	3		4
4. 我想辭去教職	1	2	3		4
5. 我會以教書作為我的終身職業	1	2	3		4
6. 作為一教師,我感到十分榮幸	1	2	3		4
7. 在工作上我可實踐理想	1	2	3		4
8. 教師的權威正逐漸下降	1	2	3		4
9. 教師的責任越來越沉重	1	2	3		4
10. 我追求不斷改善教學質素	1	2	3		4

<(19-20) 可自由選擇作答>

(19) 作為一教師，你認為在工作上最大的問題或困難是甚麼?

(20) 你滿意現時教師的社會地位及待遇嗎?請自由暢談任何想法。

<問卷完，請把填妥的問卷放入回郵信封寄回，多謝合作!>

(如有疑問，請聯絡香中文大學社會學系研究生吳佩雯，可致電 26096625 或電郵至 denise7979@hotmail.com)

Appendix III:

Consistency scale of the most effective teaching method and the most frequently used method

Scale	No. of pairs of answers matched	Example <Q8a,b/9a,b>	Interpretation
1	2	<5,4/5,4>	Teachers can absolutely apply the first two most effective teaching methods as the first two most frequently used methods
2	2	<5,4/4,5>	Teachers can apply the first two most effective teaching methods as the first two most frequently used methods generally
3	1	<5,1/5,3>	Teachers can apply the most effective teaching method as the most frequently used methods
4	1	<5,1/3,5>	Teachers can apply the most effective teaching method as the second most frequently used methods
5	1	<1,5/5,3>	Teachers can apply the second most effective method as the most frequently used method
6	1	<1,5/3,5>	Teachers can apply the second most effective method as the second most frequently used method
7	0	<1,2/5,3>	Teaches cannot apply the first two most effective methods as the first two most frequently used methods

Appendix IV:
Answers of the Two Open-ended Questions in the Questionnaire Survey

問卷編號	(20) 作為一教師，你認為在工作上最大的問題或困難是甚麼？	(21) 你滿意現時教師的社會地位及待遇嗎？請自由暢談任何想法。
01	工作量太大	1) 滿意 2) 社會上很多聲音(特別是商界及政界)，包括很多非專業及反專業的聲音，對教育界指指點點，使教育界備受壓力。亦不尊重教育專業
02	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 同事的工作態度和理念與自己不同- 新的工作不斷增加(隨著教改)，但舊的未有刪減- 校長並不了解或掌握我的工作成果(尤其在設計新課程時)，故未能提供適當的支援和認同	[沒有回應]
04	教育政策不斷更改，教育資源分配，競爭	[沒有回應]
05	少配合(家長、社會、政策)	不滿意市民及學生不尊重老師
07	缺乏支援，工作量日益增多	[沒有回應]
10	太少資源和空間去預備課程改動太頻密，缺乏遠象	一般從學生而來的尊重日漸下降，而從家長(甚至社會)而來的要求和評[抨]擊卻愈來愈激烈
11	Too much paper work and workload	Not really. People think that being a teacher is good because we have a stable salary. However, they have neglected the workload and pressure we have.

12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 現時課程仍受到公開試(HKCE 及 HKAL)的限制，老師往往要達到長所定公開試的合格率已[而]要不停為學生補課，無形中亦增加老師的壓力- 老師除教學外亦要兼任不同職務，工作量十分大，難令老師教學素提升	非常不滿意，因為現時教師是朝令夕改的教育改革的犧牲品。所謂「提升學生語文能力」的政策，只是要老師不斷接受 benchmark, 根本沒有信任及尊重過教師，這些門面功夫絕對不幫助提升學生的語文能力。
13	教師要兼顧教學以外的工作愈來愈多，準備教學的時間不斷下降，直接影響教學質素，教師亦是執行者，雖然是最前線工作，但根本只是服從命令而沒有發表意見的機會。	不滿意，所有責任只歸咎於教師，認為教師是高薪厚職，根本抹殺[煞]教師背後的努力和壓力，而並不明白教師根本沒有公務員的任何福利
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1) 教育政策的變動，令我們難於應變2) 工作環境欠佳，影響個人健康及工作表現	1) 待遇尚可，但社會地位卻漸低落，特別是學生對老師的態度
16	沒有時間，如果可以減低工作量，無論備課或批改作業的時間都可大量增加，從而改善教學質素	待遇滿意，地位則不太滿意。師尊何在是現今教師們所面對的難題，家長的不理也令教師覺得百上加斤
18	沉重壓力，超額工作量	一般，欠缺福利(如醫療)
19	Many side-works to do, to handle	No! Teachers should be given more respect!
20	校長在行政、教學、工作上的限制	不滿意，往往忽略老師教學時的辛勞，只理會老師有多高薪及多假期
22	工作量太大，有心無力，缺空間讓教師自我調適，各發展(教學上及行政上)及政策多而未必對學生有好處，令教師感吃力又不討好	不定，許多非育範疇的社會人士的意見彈多於讚，打擊了許多有理想又盡心盡責的老師，蔑視師專業，這些眼光及低貶是不良待遇，那不是薪金可彌補或反映到的
23	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1) 需兼做非專業性的工作2) 行政事務纏身，對學生敏感度減低 / 少了接觸時間	合理

24	太少時間備課及進修，令學術水平下降	滿意
25	太多其他工作應付，像總務、雜工等	[沒有回應]
26	太多非教學上的工作，令教學工作的時間減少，效能降低	滿意，相對算穩定及人工高
27	須參與頗多行政工作，校務會議冗長	尚滿意，但現在教師的社會地位正趨逐漸下降，亦飽受各方面之挑戰 e.g.家長，教育政策
28	工作量太多，空間太少	我覺得教師的社會地位日漸下降，儘管教在學中仍有一定的權威性。 我滿意教師之待遇
29	教育制度之紂制，變得太快，行政工作沉重，缺少與學生接觸、溝通，了解，支援，有內疚感。	極不滿意，像服務在商言商，欠人性、人情，人與人因忙、忘，導致「亡」身邊一切人及物、悲哀!
30	難有時間和空間完全瞭解學生個別問題	由於種種的教育策，都在顯示對現時教師不信任，令教師於社會上的地位已日漸下降，縱有熱誠的老師也受到冷卻，久而久之，大家只在為稻樑謀而教學。
31	校內權力職級	倘[尚]可，已比外間工作待遇好
32	擔任很多非教學工作，及參與太多冗長而無意義的會議	社會地位仍待提高

33	時間不足，校方的要求	最近社會對教師的要求越來越高，所有學生未能達標的事都會歸於教師身上，使教師壓力愈來愈大
34	教育政策不能貫徹，致師無所適從。教師空間不足，致在教學上未能創新	社會地位不高，待遇不俗
37	1) 常做和教學沒有關係的工作 e.g. 評估，填表 2) 學生的家庭背景很影響老師的教學	待遇合宜 社會地位逐漸下降，可能是家長的要求愈來愈高
38	工作量太多，時間不足夠用	[沒有回應]
39	以有限的時間去完成越來越沉重的責任	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 地位很低 - 很多行外人不明白老師工作的辛酸 - 語文老師的工作量高，但是待遇並不因此而調高 - 津校老師不是公務員，沒有任何福利，卻要和公務員一減薪，不公平
40	教改變革，風起雲湧，太多工作量，空間少。社會要求高，曾遭教署、傳媒不合理的抹黑	社會地位給別人的印象仍未夠專業，待遇看來比一般行業似乎高，但其實待遇應可向上調，因為最受氣(學生)的行業可說是教書，背後所付出的代價只有內行人才明白
41	1) 對老師的要求不斷增加 2) 學生學習態度不夠積極 3) 課程時間緊逼	可以接受
43	面對不認同的教改方向，仍要被人牽著鼻子走	尚可，對一個有良知的教育工作者現在領取的薪酬拿少了
45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 家長的不合作 - 工作量太多太密 	不滿意 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 社會人仕多從負面角度看教師，不體諒 - 教改太密太急，令老師難以適應，他們不是前線工作人員，太理論

46	在教學時要同時應付非教學工作，令到備課及處理學生問題時感到時間不足，而非[不]能令教學達到最佳效果	不滿意 - 未能達到其他人的認同，令到執行校務時處處受制，有束縛，無力感
47	教務工作繁重，批改作業需時	滿意教師現時的社會地位，待遇合理，但不滿再減薪
50	教育改革，會議太多太長，校方行政的壓力	待遇尚可，但缺乏晉升機會 社會地位下降，家長、學生、其他人仕都減少了對教師之信任和尊重
51	令學生提起學習的動機及主動學習，積極求知	滿意目前待遇，但憂慮社會地位下降及學生尊師重道
53	教改變得太快，要不斷進修試以迎合現時需要	頗滿意
54	政策常變，難以跟上步伐	不，因為社會對老師太多要求，教學變得商業化
58	[沒有回應]	可再提高一點
59	1) 工作量大 2) 大量進修要無奈面對 3) 基準試令人沮喪	1) 地位遭受踐踏 2) 沒有 say 的權利 3) 學生懂得投訴途徑 4) 報紙傳媒亦製造大量教學壓力
61	教育政策的不斷改變	教師地位不斷下降，因此漸感不滿意 致[至]於教師的待遇，則頗滿意

62	非教學工作佔用了太多時間，往往妨礙教學工作或接見和輔導學生的時間	個人對師的社會地位無特別要求，但覺家長和教師應在同一陣線，為小朋友努力
63	變幻無常的教育政策，教學上的不穩，社會背境導致學生的個別問題；如破碎家庭	師的社會地位及待遇也令人滿意，但社會對教師的要求卻越來越高，並不反對外界對學校的關注及關心，但不了解實況而作出干御[預]，那給教師太大壓力及無奈的感覺
65	上層的政策常變，要求不統一，經常要求各式各樣的評估，使我感到壓力	[沒有回應]
66	1) 學生品學日益退步 2) 在現行政策下，教師只有責任教學生，沒有權力教學生 3) 非教學的工作太多，太多事情是為做而做，為改革而改革，經常事倍功半，吃力不討好	1) 教師的待遇，如果單計算薪酬，可算是相當不錯 2) 地位方面正日益下降，原因是來自政府及輿論界的指責。政府喜歡將事件簡單化，將所有責任歸咎某一團體上。例如學生英文水平下降，便直接[將]責任推在英文教師身上，而不再考慮其他因素
67	- 同時兼顧各樣工作 - 教育制度(esp. the increasing emphasis on appraisal) 令老師不敢創新，避免犯錯	社會地位: ok, 但希望傳媒不要亂信某些商家的看法，以為老師整體質責欠佳。其次，不要將學生表現下降歸咎於教師。常變的教育政策，著重非人性的元素(如: I.T.)是使教師無暇照顧學生的主因，只要上述事情不再發生，老師的地位將提高。待遇不錯了。
68	管理課室秩序，令學生專心上課	不滿意。因為香港政府及商人經常貶低教師的社會地位
69	有一位無能的校長，學校各方面的發展沒有明確的方向、目標	不滿意，社會對老師的求不斷增加，但對老師的支援及尊重則減少
70	欠缺足夠時間備課及接受培訓	很多人誤以為老師工作輕省、假期多，但我同薪酬有下調的空間，不應把青少年問題只歸咎於學校教育的「失敗」！

71	教育制度之僵化，考試制度使很多學生成為「失敗者」。教育制度缺乏發展方向	非常滿意，我覺得自己的工作常得到別人的欣賞和稱讚 金錢上之回報也不錯
72	學習動機低的學生，每班人數太多(近40人)，無法應付	最不滿意教育改革沒考慮前線老師的實際處境
73	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 非教學工作十分繁重- 每班人數甚多- 外行領導內行	絕不滿意
74	學校的支持	社會地位: 不滿意，缺乏尊重 待遇: 在薪酬方面沒大問題
75	工作量太多，難以改善教學質素，亦欠缺時間輔導學生。另外，現今學生的學習動機很低，而且能力亦低，達不到應有的水平	老師欠缺多項福利，例如醫療
77	教育政策搖擺不定。有關局祇知現制度欠妥善，卻在未找到真正路向下多番作出改革，以塞社會人士之口及疑慮，結果自是事倍功半，勞民傷財，前線工作者心皆疲，而教育果效及質素卻未見顯著提升	以薪酬計，教師待遇尚算不薄，但社會地位卻偏低，因行外人士祇會覺得在現時的經濟環境下，教師屬於薪優兼假期多之行業，但培養學生果效卻不彰顯，故此經常對教師懷有抱怨或妒忌心態，且以為祇需有夠學歷便等同有足夠投能及技巧教導學生，不覺得這是一門需要專業技能的行業

共收問卷:
(Total questionnaire collected): 79

回應以上兩題問卷人數:
(Number of respondents of the above two questions): 57

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